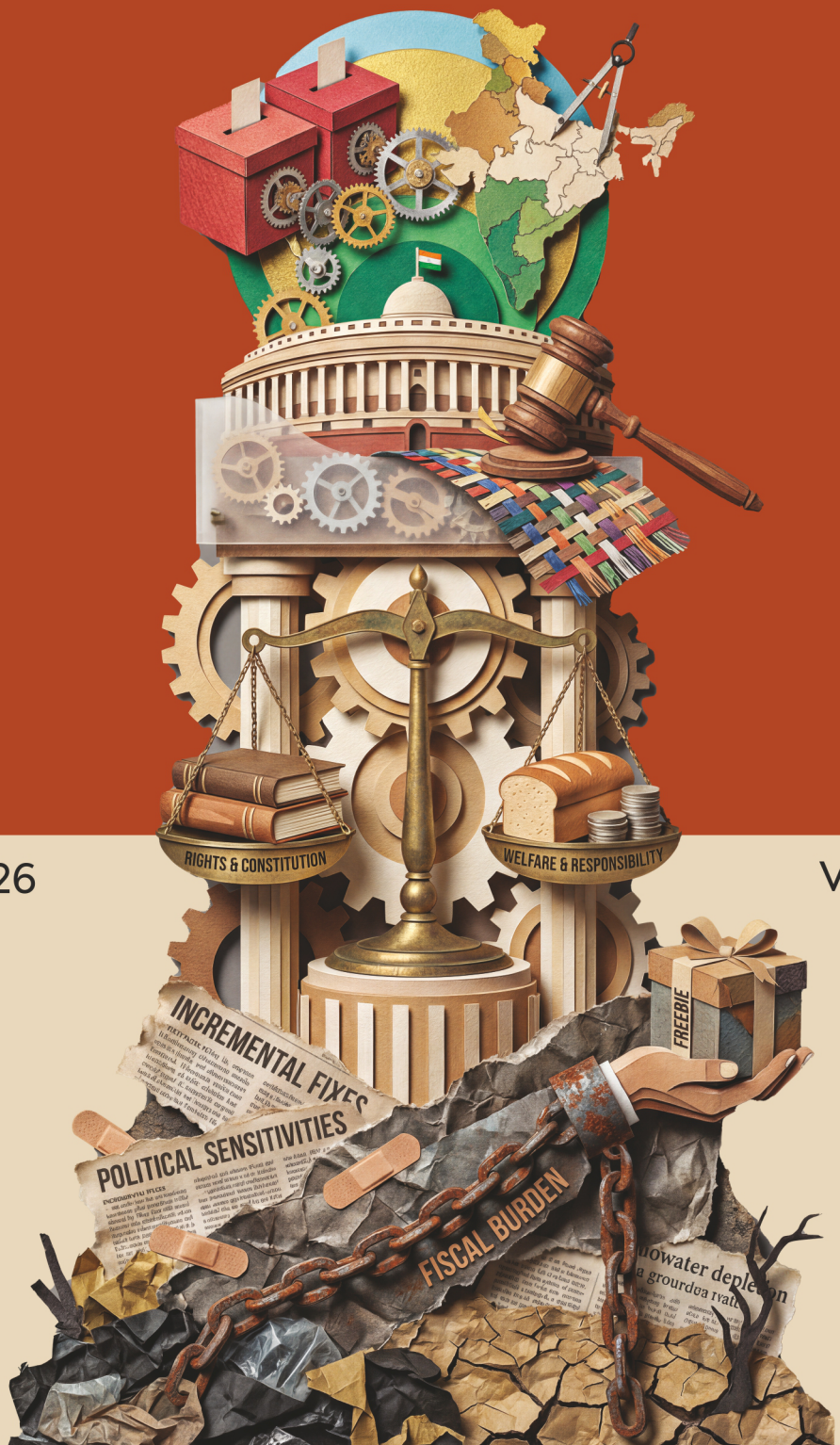
# Towards better INDIA

By *Forum for Reforms*

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VOL - I

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By *Forum for Reforms*

VOLUME – I

(JAN 2026)

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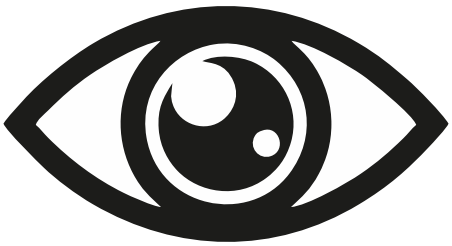

## VISION

To endeavour towards India's economic, social and cultural development, on a sustainable basis, for our country's betterment, anchored on national security and stability, creating happiness and peace for all its citizens.

## MISSION

Envisioning, deliberating, reflecting and communicating opinions and actions to be taken on pressing issues of national interest and the reforms essential for our country's progress, to stakeholders like governments, political parties and others, for their consideration and implementation.

# PREFACE

India's post-Independence journey has been marked by significant achievements in governance, infrastructure, science, and technology. At the same time, several deep-rooted structural challenges such as population growth, environmental stress, judicial delays, governance reforms, and social equity continue to impede the nation's progress. Addressing these issues requires more than rhetoric; it calls for informed analysis, pragmatic solutions, and sustained institutional effort. It is in this context that the Forum for Reforms, a think tank, finds its relevance.

This volume, Towards a Better India, brings together reflections from professionals with long associations with India's public sector. Drawing on their exposure to both policy formulation and implementation, the contributors offer perspectives informed by technical understanding and administrative practice, along with a commitment to public welfare. The Forum maintains an apolitical, reform-oriented outlook, guided by a focus on national interest rather than partisan considerations.

The essays in this book engage with some of the most pressing issues confronting contemporary India, including plastic waste management, population control, groundwater depletion, electoral and judicial reforms, delimitation, the Uniform Civil Code, and the broader vision of Viksit Bharat @2047. Each contribution seeks to move beyond surface-level symptoms to examine underlying causes, systemic limitations, and long-term consequences.

A defining feature of this work is its emphasis on practicality. Rather than remaining confined to critique, the essays propose feasible policy measures, institutional reforms, and behavioural changes within India's democratic and constitutional framework. The contributors recognise that meaningful reform is necessarily incremental and dependent on public awareness, administrative capacity, and political will.

Towards a Better India is therefore not merely a collection of essays, but a constructive civic intervention. It invites policymakers, administrators, scholars, and citizens to engage seriously with the task of nation-building, encouraging informed debate and long-term thinking. The Forum hopes this volume will contribute to shaping a more equitable, efficient, and sustainable India.

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# PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT AND RECYCLING

Author : K.S. Balachandra
Aug 2023

## THE ISSUE

The world production of plastic materials is more than 150 million tons per annum. Plastic usage has become an essential part of our day-to-day lifestyle. Plastic is a non-bio degradable material. The plastic production has also resulted in release of 2 billion tons of Carbon dioxide (one of the greenhouse gases) to the atmosphere. A major part of the manufactured plastic at end of its working life, as and when disposed as waste, comes back to the nature. More than 50% of the plastic produced is grouped under single use plastic and it comes as a waste immediately after one use. It is said that 90% of the total waste plastic is going to landfills polluting the land it fills. It remains for hundreds of years in the environment it goes into since it is not bio degradable. It is also estimated that 12 million tonnes of plastic is leaking into the oceans and causing a large impact on the entire ocean environment. In this way plastics has become a major hazard to the entire earth.

Even in India 9.4 million tons of plastic waste was collected in year 2018-19. This comes to about 26000 tons per day of waste plastics. Of this about 60 % (5.4 mil tons) is reported as recycled. However, in real terms we can approximate that only about 12% of total collected waste plastic is recycled into products of reuse, 20% is channelised for other end of life solutions like incineration / combustion process and conversion of plastic to fuel. The remaining 68% is disposed off as landfill and such other unscientific ways spreading out all over and polluting land, river, ocean etc. A global average of around 20% to 50% is reported to have been achieved in recycling in advanced countries.

It is estimated that today India is generating about 42 million tons of solid waste annually in urban areas. While a small part of the total solid waste collected in our country is being segregated suitable for recycling, a major part is clubbed and used for landfills. Plastics in the landfill is a major source of land pollution making the refilled land infertile and fit only for construction and non-agricultural uses. Plastics take more than 500 to 1000 years to decompose. The water percolating through the lands filled with plastic waste containing toxic wastes joins underground water streams, rivers and oceans and pollute all these water bodies. Thus, water for human consumption and oceans where fishes, a major source of food thrives, is getting polluted.

In some cities a part of the urban waste including plastic is being processed and used as fuel in power generation and some other combustion processes. This process exhausts highly polluting gases and greenhouse gases to atmosphere.

Such fuel from solid wastes containing plastics is also being used as supplementary fuel in coal fired Thermal Power Plants. These units will also be sources of atmospheric pollution.

Under this scenario two important steps are required to limit this impact. The first step is to maximise separation and collection of waste plastic from other solid wastes and the second step would be to maximise the recycling / reuse of the collected waste plastics and put it back to use, thereby reducing fresh production of Plastics. In effect developing a circular economy in Plastic production and reuse should be the ultimate aim. Of course, reduction in use of plastics by changes in lifestyle as well as use of alternate materials / products is also required as a basic approach.

Ocean pollution due to plastic wastes joining it by various means is posing another major international hazard. Today it is estimated that about 8 to 12 million tons of plastic waste is getting added to oceans globally every year and accumulated plastic waste in oceans is estimated to be about 150 million tons. The oceans are said to be the most polluted areas with pollution due to micro plastics (pieces smaller than 5 mm). The entire ocean environment has been disturbed with major impact on many species of marine living beings, in the process reducing yields. The plastics and associated pollutants are being consumed by fishes and other sea living beings. These being a major food source is posing a threat to human food source. At present it is estimated that 1 kg of plastic is already in the ocean for every 5 kg of fish. At present rate of waste plastic getting added to oceans this is estimated that by year 2050 there will be more plastic than fish in the oceans.

Recycling is not essentially a safe and permanent solution against plastic pollution. During recycling colours and additives get added which makes the recycled plastic products more hazardous. Also maximum of 2 to 3 cycles of recycling is possible. However, under present circumstances with the aim of achieving a circular economy and thereby reduce new plastic production and economise on raw materials and energy on this account, recycling is the best option on hand.

In this note we will discuss production of plastics and waste plastic management and recycling in India. Effective Waste management principally involves the practice of 7 R namely Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Re-purpose, Recycle and Recover.

## PLASTIC PRODUCTION

India produced about 4.7 million tons of plastic in year 2005. This has grown exponentially to 12.5 million tons in year 2019-20. In addition to this about 2 million tons of plastic was imported and a total of 15 million tons of plastic was consumed during the year. By year 2050 at the present growth rate it is estimated that 15% of the global carbon budget will be on account of plastic production.

Virtually the entire plastic production is derived from fossil fuels in the petrochemical industries. This entire production will come back as a waste at a later date. The Petrochemical industries produce and sell plastics in pellet form to plastic producers, who in turn convert them to various types of plastics according to the needs of various industries. It is estimated that about 30,000 small and medium industries are involved in the production of finished plastic products. The plastic produced includes large portions of the single use plastics and multi layered plastics used in industries and packaging on a large scale. The industries buy these plastics according to their requirements. Nowhere in this whole cycle the plastic recyclability is kept in consideration. It is also to be considered that the fossil fuels used in producing plastics are mostly imported in India entailing a large FE burden.

## WASTE PLASTIC COLLECTION AND SEGREGATION

In general plastic disposed as waste is not available on standalone basis. It comes out along with all other wastes generated. Waste generated is usually divided as solid waste and liquid waste. Plastics are categorised under solid waste. Roughly the solid waste generated in our cities can be divided as Organic waste (50%), Metals (6%), Plastics (6%), paper, glass and other various materials. They are dumped together. The first critical task lies in its collection and segregation. Today in India only the first level of segregation in the form of wet waste (consisting of bio degradable materials) and Dry waste (consisting of all other solid materials) is mostly adopted. This is totally inadequate. It is desirable to segregate the dry waste received at source generally in the following ways:

a) Organic waste
b) Metals
c) Plastics
d) Paper
e) Glass
f) Clothes
g) E-Waste

This division is possible only with the cooperation of all citizens and other stakeholders. This requires educating of all citizens in proper disposal ways. The government body should organise suitable collection points / bins etc. in large number of locations suitable in close proximity of living areas for convenience of citizens to dispose the wastes generated by them. Collection from individual households or other user locations is also a common practice in urban areas. The result should be that all waste generated is collected and not littered.

The next step after disposal into selected location by waste generators is collection of all wastes by the Government body identified as responsible for this task, segregation of the collected waste into suitable groups such that it is convenient for reaching it to the right location for recycling or reuse.

These needs to be adopted not only for plastics but for all other materials. This needs a robust system of waste collection and segregation management establishment at all levels from Panchayats to City Corporations including training of a large workforce and successful management day in and out.

As per the regulations the onus of collecting the waste rests with local government bodies, producers, importers and brand owners. However apart from the arrangements by city / town administration, the collection of waste materials like plastics is mostly managed by informal sector, most of whom are rag pickers. They pass the collected wastes to the respective material collection facilities, which is a more organised setup. Today it is said that more than half of the collected waste plastic is accounted by these people, though accurate figures are not available. It is also common that more often than not the process of collection is outsourced thus absolving their responsibilities.

Considering above facts and figures, after collecting the total waste generated, separation of plastic from other collected wastes is a critical issue. At present it is estimated that only 70 % of waste generated is collected in the system of which only 27% is segregated and the balance is disposed as landfill. From this it would be clear that achieving collection of total plastic waste generated is still far and more and more waste plastic component should be segregated and brought for reuse or recycling.

## RECYCLING / REUSE OF WASTE PLASTIC

The collected plastic waste also needs further segregation / sorting before the next step is taken. The plastic has wide range of qualities based on the type of plastic and its properties. Not all plastics can be reused or recycled. This again requires action at plastic waste collection centres. Today there are hardly any such processing systems under the agencies receiving and handling waste plastic. That is why a major part of the wastes goes into landfills.

Alternately they are clubbed with other wastes and used for incineration as fuel for power generation or industrial purposes. This again is not a desirable method of plastic disposal since it emits poisonous and obnoxious gases during combustion. Today the major part of collection of waste plastic and distribution to recycling centres and its reuse is in small, unorganised private sector as discussed above. Here mostly the plastics collected and separated by the government bodies and the small collection agents (collecting mostly the plastic waste available separately at source) gets segregated and goes for reuse.

There are seven types of plastics which can be recycled. They are as follows:

| Sl No. | Type Of Plastic | Share In Tot Plastic Waste | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | PET | 12% | Clothing fibres can be manufactured from this. This is the most recycled item |
| 2 | HDPE | 7% | Suitable for piping and also easy to recycle |
| 3 | PP | 14% | Used in Tupperware, car parts etc. It is difficult to recycle |
| 4 | LDPE | 31% | Used in plastic bags and such single use plastics of common daily use. Not easily recycled. Needs to be further processed for recycling. |
| 5 | PVC | NA | Used in wires and pipes. Can be recycled. |
| 6 | PS | 1% | Used in items such as egg cartons, cups etc. and cannot be recycled. |
| 7 | Others | 35% | These are mostly multi layered package wastes. Not easily recycled. Needs to be further processed for recycling. |

It can be seen from the table that LDPE and multi layered plastics which form a major part of wastes are not easily recyclable. Just to get a feel of the problem one of the recycling industries had reported that they could only process 40 % of the total waste plastic received by them. The balance goes for other ways of plastic disposal.

## THE FOLLOWING ARE VARIOUS REUSE / RECYCLE POSSIBILITIES

a. In the traditional recycling and reuse process the waste plastic is melted and remoulded to produce new plastic goods. The range of products which can be manufactured is almost as wide as the newly manufactured goods. This is an established industry in private and small sector operating widely. Presently about 100 recycling units are operating in organised industrial sector and about 10,000 units are estimated to be operating in unorganised small and micro industrial sectors and home industries. Many of these companies can deal with only limited types of Plastics. These industries produce wide range of daily use domestic products.

b. In the advanced recycling process called Pyrolysis (In this process crude oil can be manufactured), Chemical recycling and Gasification are used to make different products.

c. The waste (sometimes combined with other solid wastes) is processed and used as combustion material for energy production or in some industries such as cement manufacturing. However, this adds to the atmospheric pollution due to the combustion. They are also considered inefficient.

d. Packaging industry is an area where plastics are used widely. Here the recycled plastics can be modelled to be used in large scale.

e. Road making is an area where plastics can be reused in large quantities. Use of plastics mixed with the road black topping bitumen has proved to improve the road properties. Here availability of right quality of plastic in right quantity at right time appears to be the problem.

f. Clean and reuse is also adopted where possible and it is not economical to recycle.

g. The following special areas also produce large quantities of plastic wastes and are being dealt separately and more effectively than the general plastic waste.

   i. Bio medical waste contains other infected materials apart from large parts of plastics and is necessary to be handled separately in safe and healthy manner.

   ii. E- Wastes generation is expectedly growing at a very fast rate and is a specialised area since it not only involves large proportion of plastic but also many other materials including precious metals. This part of recycling industry is getting established more rapidly as a specialised stream.

iii. Old battery recycling is also a specialised area with many materials including plastics being available. This is also growing at a very fast rate in proportion to the growth of E- vehicles market and the fast-emerging electricity storage system market. However, this recycling system is also developing as a separate stream and is working as replacements to new production.

CPCB is establishing a centralised web portal for keeping track of the entire process of waste plastic management. Here all plastic waste generators, collectors, recyclers etc. have to register and report the details of the plastic waste handled by them which in turn gets compiled.

Producer / Generator's responsibility to collect and reuse the plastic components of their manufactured items is an upcoming area. Here the producer is expected to collect their old disposable products and segregate and reuse the plastics and also other components. The CPCB established portal called centralised extended producer responsibility portal for plastic packaging is a step in this direction.

It is interesting to note that a few years back wastes produced in other countries was being imported and reprocessing/ recycling was carried out in India. Now there is restriction on importing plastic waste.

## LAWS AND REGULATIONS IN SUPPORT

The Plastic pollution and its prevention is one of the major subjects under the umbrella of environment protection and is under active discussion internationally and new laws and agreements are being framed updated internationally based on development of new technologies.

Interestingly there is an international agreement to totally control plastic pollution internationally by year 2024. But it appears more on paper than reality.

Indian Government has also been addressing this issue regularly. The first laws on waste management including plastic came in the form of “Environment Protection Act 1986”. The subject of Plastic pollution was independently tackled with the publication of “Plastic Waste Management Rules 2011”. Amendments to this has been issued from time to time based on developments in time framework with some new major rules issued in 2016, 2018, 2021 (two times) and 2022 (two times) as amendments. Some of the major rules issued and other major steps taken are as follows:

1. Extended producer / Generator responsibility ( covering producers, importers, brand owners and waste processors) has been covered under these laws. However under these rules the recycling process by the agency may start progressively only from 2024-25.

2. The laws have been extended to cover rural areas also.

3. Single use plastics has been totally banned from July 2022. Single use plastics are defined as an item that is intended to be used once for the same purpose before being disposed or recycled. This enables more effective collection of waste plastic and its reuse. Carry bags less than 50 microns have also been totally banned from manufacture and usage under this category.
4. However, this excludes packaging plastics. Under this a host of plastic products used by FMCG companies from plastic bottles, sachets, to packets used for junk foods and so on which are common, large scale daily use items are exempt. A plastic industry body has come out with data that in year 2018-19 59% of plastic waste generated was grouped under packaging plastics of which 35% was multi layered package plastic.
5. Import of solid plastic scrap banned in SEZ and export-oriented units.
6. Petrochemical industries have been directed to stop supply of raw materials required for manufacturing single use plastics.
7. Customs directed to strictly monitor and stop import of single use plastic articles.
8. Penalties, permit systems and closure of operations for firms violating rules have been framed.
9. Polluters pay principle is being adopted.
10. Government order mandates that all roads within 50 KM of urban centres with more than 5 lakh population must blend waste plastic with bitumen used in construction of the roads. In case of non-availability of waste plastic, special permit shall be obtained to proceed without using waste plastic.
11. Indian Road Congress has issued guidelines for use of waste plastics in road making.
12. All recyclers to obtain registration from state pollution control board.

## ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

From the various government orders and guidelines and the progress thereon, it can be noted that the Government in our country and the individual states have responded to the call of the day and taken quite a number of steps in management of Plastic waste. From time-to-time amendments to the rules have been issued based on the changes in the situation and local conditions. Some of these amendments have diluted the earlier and more stringent regulations in support of the industrial sector. However, at ground level as well as from the figures of the amount of waste collected, sorted and recycled it can be noted that we are still far away from our objectives. It has been our common

experience that in many areas of government management, while adequate rules and regulations have been passed by the Government, at the implementation level the execution has been poor leading to poor end results. To some extent this is also true with this subject.

In order to achieve better results many crucial steps need to be taken up at ground level to achieve better end results we bring below a few steps, which in our opinion can improve the overall plastic waste management at operation levels:

### 1. Effective collection and segregation of collected wastes

As brought out above a big part of plastic waste pollution is caused by the mixed garbage collected in urban areas and lack of effective steps in its sorting to segregate plastic waste apart from other wastes. We note that every city has a system of garbage collection and disposal. There has been a healthy and strong competition among the cities of India on this subject wherein for example Indore city in MP has been adjudged the best city in the latest round of assessment. However, the overall figures of waste management and visit to many urban areas show that areas littered with garbage is a common sight in most of the cities. Also, the percentage of waste plastic available from garbage shows that this process of collection and sorting is still not effective.

Here the role of citizens is also very important in making this process effective by segregating plastic and other wastes at source. This involves educating the citizens in waste segregation and the process of incentives and disincentives. Incentives for collection and sorting and penalties for disposal of garbage in unauthorised areas are necessary. Also, the facilities for disposal need to be such that it is easily approachable to all. This has to be developed on a pan India basis by expert agencies as a common guideline and implemented effectively.

In this regard the systems being followed in developed countries with very good amount of success may be noted. Every area is provided with collection centres with different styles of bins allocated for different materials such as wet waste, plastics, glass, paper etc. It may also be noted that all citizens also are made to follow these systems strictly while disposing the wastes.

### 2. Pre-processing to be organised

After sorting out the total waste and separating only plastics, this has to further undergo separation of various types of plastics based on type of reuse and pre-processing some types of collected plastics as discussed in above paragraphs. This shall be recognised and organised, preferably before despatch and transport to user / recycler locations.

### 3. Regularise unorganised sector of waste collection

Apart from the combined garbage of urban areas being collected by the city authorities the collection of only waste plastic, its sorting and distribution is being carried out on a large scale in unorganised sector at present. They are doing a very commendable job. However, this lacks a scientific and organised approach with improper links for distribution and recycling. This needs to be organised by the government with proper monitoring and streamlined.

### 4. Incentives for recycling

The recycling industry should also be properly supported and encouraged by way of tax rebates on products from recycled plastic waste, encouragement of recycled products usage over the fresh plastic products etc.

### 5. Establishment of Collection centres

Number of standalone waste plastic collection centres at easily approachable locations shall be established and suitable payment for the plastic waste received may be organised. For example, in some large shopping malls used plastic bottles are collected and a prefixed amount is reduced from the bills generated there. Such efforts should be multiplied widely.

### 6. Battery and E-Waste recycling

This area is already being handled better than other areas due to the nature of the returnable waste products. They are easily available independently not mixed with other wastes. The returns after processing these items are also very encouraging. However, special waste collection centres, especially for E-wastes shall be established at easily approachable locations and suitable payment for the E-Wastes received may be organised.

### 7. Waste Plastic usage in road making

This is an area of plastic usage which is not well developed. However, the potential for usage of waste plastics of many varieties in large quantities appears a distinct possibility. Perhaps the availability of collected plastic wastes in right quantities at right places and times has not happened. Attention may be drawn on this possibility. In this regard It is understood that in Bangalore a unit has been established where bitumen blended with waste plastic is manufactured. Many roads across the country have also successfully used this practice. However, it is not widespread. This can be further developed.

## 8. General cleaning drive

We see dirtily littered wastes, predominantly plastic wastes in every nook and corner we look into. It may be urban slum areas, vacant urban lands, roadsides, sides of railway tracks, village surroundings and many such viewings. This should first be addressed firstly on a one-time basis by forming groups to address each area at urban, district, taluk and village panchayat levels. Subsequently it can be a part of running system.

With reference to ocean pollution already discussed above, this is being monitored internationally with modern marine techniques including dedicated satellite observation. We have to address prevention of the pollution of coastal areas of our country and the river pollution. Plans to take care of this aspect also needs to be developed.

## 9. Effective implementation of ban on single use plastics

Nearly 50% of the plastic waste are single use plastics and have been the major cause of pollution. They are more difficult to collect as waste and have spread over wide areas and oceans all over the globe. Most of the carry bags being used in our daily life is single use plastic. Efforts to control the production and usage of this item has been tried for many years. Its manufacture and use have been banned all over the country from 1st July 2022. At present even though single use plastic is banned we can see them being openly used all over the markets. Perhaps the lack of suitable alternates is the main cause for this.

Government should plan a clear strategy to ensure acceptable alternate for this and implement the ban in all earnestness. This needs to be taken up on a very large scale with coordinated efforts of all agencies involved.

## 10. Education and Training

As could be seen in above paragraphs the entire process of waste plastic management needs an establishment of elaborate widespread system to address the broad spectrum of different stages of management.

This needs a huge knowledgeable workforce at ground level and experts at higher level. This can even be dealt as a special subject or a part of environment engineering which is being conducted in many universities. This needs to be developed and managed such that adequate skilled manpower is available to handle the issue all over the country.

Similarly public shall deliver the wastes to collectors in segregated manner as discussed above. This needs widespread public awareness and understanding. This shall be organised. While discussing on this, the successful largescale efforts

by the Government on Swachh Bharath Mission comes to mind. Such a drive is required in this area also.

One of aspects of education can be to mould and change the mindset of people to limit plastic use. Some of typical examples are as below:

a) Use of plates, spoons and such daily use items made of metals or other non-bio degradable materials instead of plastic items.

b) Buy materials in bulk and avoid plastic packing during purchases.

c) Plan your food storage on non-plastic storage containers.

d) Carry and use only cloth bags for shopping.

e) Economise on consumables containing plastic residues such as soap powder.

f) Consumers to be more conscious of the nature of packaging of items they buy and try to buy where plastic packaging is minimised.

This list can be developed endlessly by further analysis and be part of public awareness.

## 11. Extended Producer Responsibility

As discussed in earlier paragraphs the extended producer responsibility wherein the producer also is made responsible to collect and recycle the product at end of its working life shall be organised, established and monitored. The manufacturers could be encouraged to use more recycled plastic or non-plastic materials in place of virgin plastic, especially in packaging. At present the regulations in this regard are quite relaxed under extended producer responsibility.

Here one of the methods could be the product is priced marginally higher and the additional amount collected is returned if the product is returned to producer at the end of its working life.

## 12. Reduction in use of plastics / Alternate materials

This should actually be the first step in controlling plastic waste materials. Here it has been brought out in the end as the subject of this discussion is to address the pollution that has occurred or is occurring.

Elaborate study and research are required to ensure availability of alternate materials to replace presently used plastic products. After identification of such alternates, developing them for large scale manufacture to meet the large-scale

demands is required. While we see many such alternative environmental friendly products on small scale in unorganised sectors, there is no large development in this field. This development needs adequate Governmental support including right incentives in research, manufacture and marketing. This is essential to ensure that alternates are available on large scale before banning the use of plastic items. In the case of single use plastic though it is banned we can see them being openly used all over the market. This is an example of non-effective imposition of ban without alternate solutions.

### 13. Control on Production in Petrochemical Industries

It is said that 58% of petrochemicals produced in India is used in Plastic production. At present only the entity that introduces plastic into the market is covered under producer responsibility. There should be a policy and regulation in the role of petrochemical industry in controlling the production of plastic considering recyclability and limit the production of non-recyclable plastic. This is totally overlooked so far.

### 14. Limit Use on Multilayered Plastic usage

Since the multilayered plastic which consists of different types of plastic in different layers and thus recyclability becomes very difficult and also considering the fact that it forms a considerable proportion of total waste plastic generated its use must be discouraged and controlled. Alternate designs of packings shall be encouraged.

### 15. Showcasing good practices in Plastic usage

The Central and State Governments may implement a 'No Plastic Zone' in various Government offices and other Government bodies such as Police and Army establishments. In these areas limiting or eliminating plastic usage will act as a showcase and guide for others.

### 16. Strengthening data on Plastic inventory

Generating and compiling centralised and credible data on plastic inventory covering plastic production, waste generation, recycling etc. should be strengthened to ensure effective planning of the entire system. This should cover data input from all states in well-developed uniform formats and also from private sector including data of unorganised sectors. CPCB's initiative including data collection of extended producer responsibility is a step in right direction. It is also understood that Private industry bodies are also working in this direction.

## 17. Role of NGOs

The role of innumerable NGOs in this cause has also been very commendable. Number of NGOs are involved in collection, recycling industries, general clean up processes, education of the public and so on. These are in specific areas and locations and is being operated on limited scale depending on their size and capacity. However, it only indicates their eagerness to address this major problem. They cannot be considered a solution as a regular system. However, they are like the pulse of the subject and their help should be taken in various areas during implementation.

## 18 Development of alternate products

Similarly, many alternate products in place of plastic products have been developed in various parts of the country, manufactured and under use. But these are generally in small scale limited to areas local to the industry. We hardly see such products being produced on a wider scale in other parts of the country. This knowledge and details however help the Government to identify and encourage and support such developments on a wide scale.

It may be noted that thermocole is another similar substance causing widespread pollution. It is not grouped under plastics. This also needs to be addressed at the same time.

## CONCLUSION

Pollution of this world by the non-bio degradable waste plastic materials churned out due to human activities has turned out to be a major hazard to mankind and needs to be addressed on war footing on priority basis. In this regard, in respect of our country some of the steps which we deem necessary are brought out in the previous paragraphs. We request attention of all concerned government departments and bodies on the above subject and action as required may be decided accordingly. If not strongly addressed strongly the control on plastic pollution will remain only a dream.

**Note :** The data and details in this note have been picked up from following sources:


1. Report on Plastic Waste Management by Ministry of Housing and Urban development, Government of India, March 2019.
2. Journal “Down To Earth” March 2022 and September 2022 issues published by CSE, Delhi, a non-profit organisation dedicated to environment protection.
3. Technical articles published in Times of India from time to time.

# POPULATION CONTROL

Author : K. Ravindra babu
June 2023

## 1. ABSTRACT:

India, now the world's most populous country, faces critical challenges due to its ever-growing population. This article examines the direct and indirect consequences of high population growth on development, environment, and social stability, and proposes a comprehensive national policy anchored on the Two-Child Norm for achieving sustainable progress.

## 2. Direct Problems Associated with High Population.

### a) Development and Poverty

Rapid population growth hinders development. Natural resources are finite and cannot keep pace with uncontrolled growth, resulting in higher poverty levels. Poverty and population reinforce each other, creating a self-sustaining cycle. The greater the poverty, the more funds are diverted to welfare, leaving less for infrastructure and economic development.

### b) Unemployment

With a rising population, job creation fails to keep up, leading to unemployment, which in turn breeds social unrest and crime.

### c) Education and Health

Excess population burdens education and healthcare systems which form the foundation of a modern society, thus impeding progress.

### d) India's Development Indicators

India ranks low on several key development indices:

| Indicator | India | World |
|---|---|---|
| Illiteracy | 22% | — |
| Per Capita Income | 1.27 lakh / annum | — |
| Absolute Poverty | 10% | — |
| Blindness | 80 lakh (0.6%) | — |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Disability | 2.68 crore | — |
| Infant Mortality | 30 per 1,000 births | — |
| Power Consumption | 1,208 kWh | World Avg: 3,260 kWh |
| Trees per Person | 25 | World Avg: 380 |
| Happiness Index | 136th / 146 | — |
| Human Development Index | 139th | — |

The primary reason for these low rankings is India's large and growing population.

### 3. Population Density

India's area of 32,87,263 sq. km supports over 142 crore people, resulting in a density of 432 persons per sq. km which is seven times the world average of 59.74. This density is unsustainable and calls for immediate corrective measures.

### 4. Trees and Ecology

Globally, there are 3.03 trillion trees, while India has only 35 billion (1.15%), though it holds 18% of the world's population. India averages 25 trees per person, compared to the world average of 380.

Such disparity highlights how population growth harms ecology and biodiversity, which are essential for environmental balance and human survival.

### 5. Carbon Footprint

Carbon footprint measures the total greenhouse gas emissions consisting of mainly $CO_2$ and methane which are produced by human activity.

In 2020, China emitted 11,680 million tonnes (MT) of $CO_2$, the highest in the world. India, with 2,411 MT, ranked third, after the United States.

As development accelerates, energy consumption and emissions will inevitably increase. While renewable energy offers hope, the transition will take time, making population control an immediate priority to prevent environmental disaster.

### 6. Global Warming

Global warming is primarily the result of human activities such as burning fossil fuels, which release greenhouse gases.

Consequences include:

a. Rising global temperatures
b. Melting glaciers
c. Rising sea levels
d. Flooding and coastal erosion

Since global warming is human-induced, controlling population growth is the first essential step. The current world population of 8 billion cannot continue to rise unchecked. All nations must act decisively to stabilize population levels.

## 7. Pollution

India faces critical levels of air, water, and land pollution, especially in urban areas. Many cities and slums are unhygienic; Delhi and several others rank among the most polluted in the world.

For instance, Bengaluru has accumulated massive waste dumps that pollute local water sources and cause diseases in nearby areas. Any further rise in population will worsen these conditions.

## 8. Pressure on Urban Infrastructure

Rapid urban migration, coupled with population growth, exerts tremendous pressure on urban infrastructure and basic amenities.

Poor planning, inadequate construction quality, and overcrowding have left many cities struggling. Moreover, expanding urban housing projects are reducing cultivable land, threatening food security.

## 9. Population Growth Trends

India's population grew by 0.8% in 2021, adding about one crore people annually. At this rate, the population will reach 170 crores within 40 years.

Even the current 140 crore is difficult to manage; an additional 30 crore people will strain every aspect of national development.

## 10. The Two-Child Norm

To mitigate these challenges, India must adopt Two-Child Norm nationwide. If implemented immediately and uniformly, this policy could stabilize population well before it peaks.

India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is 2.14, and it must be reduced to 1.6–1.7 within a decade to prevent future growth.

TFR by States

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bihar | – | 3.0 | Meghalaya | – | 2.9 |
| Uttar Pradesh | – | 2.4 | Jharkhand | – | 2.3 |
| Manipur | – | 2.2 | | | |

(Most other states are at or below 2.0)

The two-child norm will not drastically affect youth demographics and will ensure sustainable development without the drawbacks seen in China's one-child policy.

## 11. Measures to Be Taken

### a) Healthcare Strengthening

Improve maternal and child healthcare.

Establish primary health centers in all rural and tribal regions within 1–2 years.

Ensure regular check-ups and vaccinations for all children below eight years.

### b) Incentives for Adopting Two-Child Norm

Monetary rewards for family planning operations.

Compensation for lost wages.

Free long-acting contraceptives and services.

Free medical check-ups, education, and vaccinations for two children.

Free Anganwadi and crèche services.

Free bus passes for school-going children.

### c) Disincentives for Non-Compliance

Ineligibility to contest for public office for couples with more than two children (prospectively, via constitutional amendment if required).

No proportional increase in subsidized rations or welfare benefits.

Limitation or denial of certain freebies to families exceeding two children.

### d) Women's Education

Enhance access to primary and secondary education for women, empowering them to understand and advocate for family planning.

### e) Affordable Contraceptives

Ensure availability and affordability of contraceptives through government programs.

### f) Addressing Gender Bias

Cultural preference for male children must be countered through scientific education and social awareness.

### g) Women's Empowerment

Guarantee equal wages, property rights, and shared parental responsibilities for women.

### h) Learning from Bangladesh

Bangladesh successfully reduced its birth rate from 6.9 (1971) to 2.06 (2017) through effective family planning campaigns and media support.

India must replicate this approach by giving greater media priority to population control awareness.

### i) Population Education

Introduce lessons on population control and family planning in school curricula, beginning from the secondary level.

### j) Delaying Early Marriages

Strictly enforce laws against child marriage, and promote counselling for newlyweds on the ideal age for childbirth.

### k) Fiscal Support

Since population control is a concurrent subject, the Central Government should extend budgetary incentives to states implementing effective measures.

### l) Family Planning Camps

Conduct annual family planning camps nationwide to maintain continuity and awareness.

## Conclusion

Unchecked population growth poses one of the gravest threats to India's development, environment, and social welfare. Implementing a uniform Two-Child Norm, supported by education, healthcare, and incentives, is essential for achieving a balanced, sustainable, and prosperous future.

# STATUS OF GROUNDWATER AVAILABILITY IN INDIA

Author: K S Balachandra
Aug. 2024.

## INTRODUCTION – THE PROBLEM

Groundwater availability and the depth below the ground level at which it is available is a crucial issue in any land area for development of greenery, agriculture and availability of water for other uses including drinking water where water from other sources such as tanks, lakes, river etc are not available. The groundwater can be recognised as a flowing stream of water below ground level at various depths. The groundwater gets charged / replenished by rainwater seeping into the ground and also from nearby water sources such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs and surface water streams. The location of groundwater stream below the ground level is based on geological formation of rocks, hard surfaces and crevices.

Few years back water used to be available at shallow depths. In those times since water supply networks were not adequately established in urban and rural populated areas, digging and establishing open wells in every house was a common practice. Agriculture was developed where water source such as lakes and tanks were available close by or in such lands where water was available in open wells at shallow depths. However, over the years as the population grew the pressure on demand for groundwater led to more and more drawl of groundwater using borewells. This practice has now become widespread in all areas. Due to this, level of groundwater availability began getting even more and more deep. Water which was easily available at depths such as 20 to 30 ft have progressively gone down to levels as deep as more than 1000 ft and even deeper. In future it would be even more deep thereby rendering the process of drilling and pumping water unviable and uneconomical. Thus now the availability of groundwater has become a critical issue in India as well as other parts of the world.

According to the reports published by GOI the following data is noteworthy:

a) 87% of total annual groundwater extraction in India is by the agricultural sector.

b) The groundwater is the source of supply of water for 80% of domestic water and 45% of irrigation water usage.

The following problems are encountered due to the increased depth of groundwater availability:

a) It affects food and water security of one and all.

b) Increased pumping costs and requirement of frequent changes in the system requiring extension of borewell and also the equipment.

c) Reduction in water availability in surface streams and lakes.

d) Land subsidence.

e) Possibility of sea water seeping inland in coastal areas.

### Pollution of Groundwater

Another major issue which has come up over the years and causing concern is the pollution of groundwater. The major reasons for this are some of the followings:

1. Number of new industries have been developed over the years. The polluted effluents from these industries are quite often discharged in open or into water sources such as lakes and streams close by without proper and adequate treatment. This seeps below and joins groundwater streams.

2. With the largescale growth of urban and semi urban areas the effluents from these {sewage, drainage and other effluents} are discharged without proper treatment into open drains and sources which further seep underground and mix with groundwater. In number of cases the sewer and drainage pipes established in these areas develop leakages over time and get mixed with groundwater.

3. With higher use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides in agriculture the water falling over these crops / leaves and further on to soil in these fields (including rain water) seep underground and such chemicals and pesticides join groundwater.

   There are many other smaller sources of underground pollution. Under these circumstances the groundwater management and ensuring clean groundwater availability has become a crucial subject to meet the ever-growingdemand of the increasing population of the country.

   Some other developments of the present times which are leading to higher consumption of ground water are practices such as increase in the growth of water intensive crops due to commercial advantages and encouragements by the Government such as energy subsidies for farming and better pricing (MSP) of agricultural products.

## REGULATIONS RELATED TO GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT

a. The policies on groundwater development and management are being handled by CGWA (Central Groundwater Protection Authority), Ministry of Water Resources formed by GOI under Environment (Protection) Act 1986.

b. Water is a state subject and hence the states will monitor the ground water management based on central policies and guidelines and corresponding state regulations.

c. The ground water (sustainable management) bill 2017 issued by Ministry of water resources provides the template on this subject.

d. The quality of water / pollution of ground water is also covered under the jurisdiction of The Water (prevention and control of pollution) Act 1974.

## STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS LIMITATIONS

Under this subject apart from planning and monitoring / study of the status of overall ground water situation, the only major control that can be / is being exercised by authorities is limited to issue of permits for drilling of new borewells and drawing water in industrial sector. All industries / infra projects drawing more than 10 Cum of water for industrial usage need to apply and get NOC from CGWA. This is in addition to overall environmental clearance for water usage for such projects from the Pollution Control Board as applicable under relevant regulations.

The regulation basically follows right to land. Any land owner (agriculture or Urban) can dig borewell in his land to meet his requirements without obtaining any clearance. In practice individual / group of agriculturists and domestic users dig borewells as per their requirements. This is quite common in urban areas also where this is used as a backup to the urban water supply system. There is no link between the control / management of ground water and land ownership. Thus, while through the planning and management processes plenty of data is generated, the regulation is only piecemeal and does not fulfil the demands of the day.

## METHODS OF BETTERING GROUNDWATER AVAILABILITY

There are many indirect methods in practice by which ground water availability can be improved as follows:

a. Growing more vegetation, especially species which preserve ground water such as Neem, Tamarind, Ashoka etc.

b. Widespread rainwater harvesting as a popular public program.

c. Watershed development projects. These are being developed in rural areas under various government programs and by NGOs.

d. Economy in use of water. Educating individual users and other water consumers.

e. Identifying benchmarks and encourage to follow the benchmarks by large water consumers.

f. Construction of small bunds across streams.

g. Develop aquifers, hand dug wells and artisan wells where found suitable.

h. Prevent pollution of ground water in accordance of Environment and Protection laws.

## ATUL BHOOJAL YOJANA

In addition to the various regulations by the Government as discussed above a new scheme called Atul Bhoojan Yojana was initiated by GOI in 2019. This is aimed at ground water management covering its usage and conservation. This scheme has two components as follows :

a. Institutional strengthening and capacity building

b. Incentive component

In this system the intention is to cover many different ongoing schemes and involvement of local communities through panchayats implementing same. This has an outlay of Rs. 6000 crores and identified targets to be implemented by year 2025. These targets have been identified in eight states. This is being coordinated by Govt. of India, (Jal Jeevan Mission) in association with World Bank (http://mowr.gov.in/schemes/atal-bhujal-yojana)

## SUGGESTIONS BASED ON PRESENT STATUS

a. Because of rising demands and uncontrolled drilling of borewells the ground water continues to get affected. To control this the right of every land owner (urban / rural / domestic) to dig borewells in the land owned by them shall be restricted. It may be noted that the ground water source and distribution is independent of the land from which it is extracted. Land boundaries do not match with the underground water source and flow. Any new borewell shall be constructed only after approval of identified authorities. The nominated authorities shall have all rights to limit / restrict / deny permission for new borewells and other types of ground water drawls. Penalty shall be imposed upon its violation.

b. Each borewell user (including borewells in their own land) shall pay for the quantity of water drawn from the ground.

c. There are many reports about successful watershed management in rural areas which helps in improving the ground water levels and thereby its availability. This may be extended under government programs to identify and implement in more areas where it is not implemented.

d. Strengthen prevention of groundwater pollution by strict implementation of environmental relevant laws. Ganga river pollution prevention project is one such major project which is projected as a large successful implementation of such laws. In this project a huge number of effluents flowing into the river have been identified and each effluent is being refined / recycled or such other steps have been taken to clean it before joining the river or recycle it for use again.

e. Incentive to individual land holders to implement rain water harvesting in their land.

f. Continue elaborate mapping and studies on ground water in all states and update it at regular intervals.

g. Include as part of syllabus in National Education Policy at various levels. Take steps to increase public awareness.

# DELIMITATION

Author:K. Ravindra Babu
Date: February 2024

## Introduction

Delimitation refers to the act or process of fixing the boundaries of territorial constituencies for the House of the People (Lok Sabha) and the Legislative Assemblies of States and Union Territories. Through this process, the total number of seats in each House is determined, including those reserved for the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), along with the specific constituencies where such reservations apply.

The key criteria considered for delimitation are:

(i) Population, (ii) Area, (iii) Majority Community, and (iv) Physical Boundaries.

## Constitutional Provisions

Articles 81 and 80 of the Constitution cap the maximum number of seats in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at 550 and 250, respectively.

Article 170 stipulates that a State Legislative Assembly shall have a minimum of 60 and a maximum of 500 members.

The underlying principle of these provisions is to ensure proportional representation and uphold the democratic ideal of "one person, one vote."

The Delimitation Commission

The process of delimitation is carried out by the Delimitation Commission (DLC), an independent body composed of:

a. A serving or retired Judge of the Supreme Court (Chairperson)
b. The Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner
c. The State Election Commissioner concerned

The Commission exercises powers of a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, and its decisions have the force of law.

## History of Delimitation in India

Since independence, the Delimitation Commission has been constituted four times—in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002. The number of Lok Sabha seats determined in each

exercise were 489, 522, 543, and 543, respectively.A limited Delimitation Commission was set up in 2020, confined to the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.

No commissions were constituted following the 1981 and 1991 censuses.

The 84th Constitutional Amendment (2002) stipulates that the next delimitation shall be conducted based on the first census taken after 2026, and until then, no redrawing of constituencies shall take place.

## Need for Reconsideration

The First Lok Sabha, constituted on 13 May 1952, comprised 489 seats representing 17.3 crore eligible voters.

Over seven decades, India's population has increased almost fourfold, along with a similar rise in the electorate.

This raises two key questions:

1. Should the cap of 550 seats in the Lok Sabha be lifted to reflect demographic growth?
2. Should interstate delimitation be reconsidered, even if it means reducing seats in states that effectively controlled population growth while increasing them in others?

## Perspective on the Cap of 550 Seats

According to the author, even after the next census, there is no necessity to increase the upper limit of 550 Lok Sabha seats as prescribed in the Constitution.

The existing strength is adequate to represent the nation's diversity and to frame effective laws, provided the quality and calibre of elected representatives are ensured.

For comparison, the United States, with 50 large states and an area three times that of India, has 435 members in its federal legislature, the U.S. Congress.

Given today's advanced communication systems, Members of Parliament need not physically meet constituents frequently to understand their concerns and these can be effectively communicated through digital and electronic means.

The primary responsibility of Members of Parliament is to legislate, formulate policies, and represent national interests, not to oversee the execution of government schemes or local development projects.

Such implementation lies within the purview of State Governments, Members of Legislative Assemblies, and local bodies.

Moreover, India's population is projected to peak in next 25 years and they start declining gradually. Therefore the need to expand the Lok Sabha does not arise.

Instead, the focus should be on increasing the number of MLAs or representatives in local bodies, who serve as the direct interface with the public.

### Interstate Delimitation

On the issue of interstate seat redistribution, it would be prudent to continue using the 1971 census data to avoid altering the balance of representation among states.

The small shortfall of seven seats from the constitutional maximum of 550 can be addressed by allocating them to states with relatively higher population growth through a suitable mechanism, without undertaking a full-scale interstate delimitation after the 2031 census.

### Rajya Sabha Representation

The Rajya Sabha currently has 245 members, and the Constitution permits expansion up to 250. This increase may be considered after the 2031 census, in tandem with the next delimitation exercise for the Lok Sabha.

### Legislative Assemblies and Councils

At present, the total number of seats across all State Legislative Assemblies stands at 4,123. As per Article 170, each Assembly may have up to 500 members, allowing for adjustments based on the 2031 census.

In populous states such as Uttar Pradesh, if representation needs exceed the 500-member limit, bifurcation of the state could be considered for better administrative efficiency.Correspondingly, the number of seats in Legislative Councils can also be revised according to the prevailing constitutional formula.

### Conclusion

Delimitation remains a vital mechanism to ensure equitable representation within India's democratic framework.

However, rather than expanding parliamentary strength, the emphasis should be on enhancing the quality, accountability, and legislative competence of representatives.

Adhering to existing caps, using the 1971 census as a stable benchmark, and allowing minor adjustments through flexible mechanisms will preserve both representation and balance among India's diverse states.

# UNIFORM CIVIL CODE: TOWARDS A TRULY SECULAR, PROGRESSIVE & VIKSIT BHARAT

Author: K A Subhas
March 2025.

**What is the uniform civil code?** The uniform civil code or UCC, as it is acronymed, has emerged as the most debated controversial and polarizing issue since 2023. UCC simply means, one law for everyone throughout India, in all civil matters relating to marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, succession, adoption and live-in relationship. This is significant in the context of evolving uniformity and equality to all our citizens in the matter of civil rights and obligations. Presently, India has only a uniform criminal code and for the civil codes, derives legalities from various Acts promulgated in the past based on the customs, rituals, cultures and holy scriptures of primarily three religious groups, Hindus, Christians and Muslims. Other religions like Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc are included in Hinduism for the aspect of UCC. When we discuss a uniform code, it is pertinent to know, how did the non-uniformity arise in the past.

**How did the non-uniformity arise pre-independence?** From the inception of civilizations, religion has been the foundation for humanity's existence. In India too, religions provided the foundations for the nucleation and development of various cultures, that over the years have seen changes in tune with the changing times of human civilization and progress. Even today, the influence exists, though to a minimal extent. In India, the evolution of religious customs and practices saw a progression from the early Vedic religion, through the rise of Buddhism and Jainism to the development of diverse Hindu sects, marked by the integration of various beliefs and practices in all civil matters. From the 7th century onwards, the spread of Islam through trade and conquests led to a significant Muslim population in India, particularly in the northern regions with the Mughal Empire further impacting the religious landscape. With the arrival of the Europeans in India, primarily after the Renaissance and Industrial Revolutions in Europe. British rule brought changes in the social structure, impacting religious practices.

In 1835, the British Government in India submitted a Report on Codification of Indian Laws. While criminal laws were codified on the lines of then extant British criminal laws, personal and civil laws were enacted separately for each religious groups viz, Hindu Code Bill, Succession Act, Hindu Marriage Act, Minority and Guardianship Act,

Adoptions and Maintenance Act, Shariat Law for Muslims, Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, Christian Marriages Act, Special Marriages Act.

**What happened post-Independence?** Post independence, the British Government formed the Constituent Assembly, a Body of 305 persons representing the British ruled states, the Indian Princely states and the backward tribes. The Body had altogether 11 sessions of 166 working days over a 3 year period, to finally introduce the Constitution of India in 1950.

As there was no consensus on including the uniform civil code under the fundamental rights, it was included as Article 44 under the Directive Principles of State Policies, which read, "The State shall endeavour to secure for its citizens, a uniform civil code, throughout the territory of India".

**Why is the Uniform Civil Code being opposed?** What are the controversies, apprehensions and opposition to the UCC. In essence, the opposition to the UCC could be broadly classified under three main heads; viz,

i. Political opposition

ii. Religious opposition

iii. North-eastern states' opposition.

**Why the political opposition?** It's quite reasonable to presume that the opposition party and their allies in the India Bloc would never support the implementation of a UCC, because it has been mooted by the ruling party. Indian politics seldom works on the merits-demerits or pros and cons or the altruistic logic. The secondary reason being standing to lose the confidence of the minorities in India. The minorities comprising of the Muslims and Christians have always stood with the Congress Party, during elections, which embodied a truly secular party. Openly declaring support to the UCC proposition would jeopardize the seemingly secular stand of the Congress.

**Why the religious opposition?** Though the main religious opposition stemmed from the Muslims, while the Christians were quite divided in supporting the UCC, with a few groups opposing and some openly voicing their support for the UCC. The self-proclaimed organizations like the AIMPLB, Ahle Adith, Jamaat-Ulema-e-Hind, Jamaat-e-Islami, have all issued a joint statement conveying their opposition to the UCC, affirming that Muslims in India be governed by the Sharia Laws, that is the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, which governs the matters of marriage, divorce, succession and inheritance of all the Muslims in India. The Muslim Organizations also point out that the UCC would deny the religious freedom enshrined

in the Constitution of India vide Articles 25-28. Further, an apprehension that the UCC would be detrimental to the Muslims in India is also being promoted.

UCC will impact Christian personal law such as inheritance, adoption, and succession, but it is the aspect of marriage and the non-recognition of divorce by the Catholic Church which will need more consideration.

Section 10A(1) of the Christian Divorce Law makes the separation period of two years mandatory for any couple to get a mutual divorce, but if UCC comes in, this would be universal.

The Succession Act of 1925 gives Christian mothers no right in the property of their deceased kids. All such property is to be inherited by the father. This provision would also be abolished if UCC comes in.

Notwithstanding, the aforementioned conflicting issues, unlike their Muslim brethren and Organizations, Christians and their various denominations are generally for a UCC.

**Why the north-eastern states' opposition?** In contrast to the rest of the country where the debate over the Uniform Civil Code often centers around religious considerations, in the NE states, it clashes with the established customary rights of various communities. These customary rights hold significant sway, particularly in the Sixth Schedule areas (Article 244) of the NE states, and are safeguarded by Article 371 of the Constitution, granting special status to NE states in matters of legislation.

Whether it is matters of property rights through inheritance or issues related to marriage and divorce, women living under customary laws have long faced discrimination. The influence of patriarchy is deeply ingrained in the social structures of the diverse communities in the NE states, due to the extremely limited involvement of women in the traditional leadership systems dictated by customary practices, women's rights are scarcely represented.

It's argued that customary practices serve to safeguard community lands from external appropriation. Therefore, determining whether women in this region would be better served by customary laws or by the potential implementation of a Uniform Civil Code necessitates inclusive discussions and a deeper understanding. When it comes to the customary rights of diverse communities in the north eastern states, it is imperative to reflect on and welcome changes that promote gender equity. However, intervention from the legislature or judiciary in establishing enforceable guidelines for customary laws based on principles of gender equity would be a positive step forward. This is because achieving change from within will be a protracted struggle, where women and other gender identities are consistently placed at a disadvantage.

## What are the positive impacts of UCC?

Gender Equality – Our Indian societies have traditionally been a patriarchal dominant society, with most of the religious customs, rituals and even the personal laws leaning towards men. Women have always been differentiated and discriminated in our societies, even today, in so far as civil matters like marriages, divorces, inheritances, etc. This bill could promote gender equality by eliminating discriminatory practices existing in some personal laws, specifically regarding inheritance and maintenance. It could also address discriminatory customs like polygamy.

One law for all citizens- Though our Constitution advocates a secular nation for all its citizens, however, quite paradoxically, Articles 25 to 29 have also at the same time, guaranteed freedom in religious and personal matters. These have also permitted them to maintain their unique cultural traditions.

Though they are contrary, however, their demarcation is on very thin and either-way interpretable lines. The UCC, would put an end to all these contradictions and there would be only one common civil law for all citizens irrespective of religions and customs.

Simplification of Legal System – Streamlining personal laws across different communities would simplify the legal system, making it more simple, efficacious and accessible.

National Integration – It could, in a way, promote a sense of national unity and a feeling of one nationhood. In India, pride of one's statehood overrides the national pride, pride of one's religion overrides the pride of all other religions, religiosity supremacy. This has in the past led to public expression of fissiparous and secessionist ideologies by states. Examples galore of demands made for separate statehoods, separate state anthems, separate state flags, etc. National integration truly requires more and more of integration and less and less of differentiation.

## What are the adverse apprehensions about UCC?

**Violation of Religious Freedom:** A UCC would seemingly appear to erode the cultural and religious identities of minority communities, infringing upon their right to follow personal religious practices.

Article 25 of Indian Constitution grants each religious group the freedom to conduct its religious affairs, and Article 29 permits them to maintain their unique cultural traditions.

**Threat to India's unique social & cultural diversity:** India is known for its diversities in cultures, customs, traditions, festivals, literature, films, etc. A single code may adversely tend to overlook these diversities, leading to social unrest & discontentment.

**Potential for Political Misuse:** The push for UCC has been a contentious political issue, with concerns that it may be used to marginalize minority communities and create communal tensions, especially during elections.

**Legal Challenges:** Implementing UCC likely to face legal challenges, as different states may have varied views on such a law. Additionally, personal laws are listed in the concurrent lists, making it a potential subject for conflict in Centre-State relations.

**What is the present scenario in India?** In India, there are two states with the UCC in force, Goa and Uttarakhand. Goa's case is principally different, as it has right from the pre-independence period with the colonization by the Portuguese, a UCC on the model of a Portuguese Civil Code. This is not what the UCC in question intends to promulgate and accomplish.

Uttarakhand is an exception, being the first Indian state to have implemented post - independence, a UCC, in Feb 2025, which is in line with our objectives and intentions of achieving a truly secular India.

The 22nd Law Commission, whose term was extended up to 31st Aug. 2024, had been entrusted with collection of feedback on UCC. The 21st Law Commission had termed the UCC undesirable and unnecessary.

**What ought to be the way forward?** The wisdom of our Father of the Indian Constitution, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's quote is quintessentially pertinent here. While he did not delve into the merits or demerits of a UCC but strongly supported Article 44, which called for securing a uniform civil code for citizens. He criticized the view that Muslim personal law was immutable and noted that regions like the North-West Frontier Province (pre-independence) followed Hindu law for issues like succession. He further argued, that religion should not govern personal laws and that the State had the right to legislate and reform social systems to address inequities and discriminations in personal laws.

Commonality and uniformity in all matters relating to its citizenry is a reinforcing and protective sheath to any feeling of one nationhood, just like in our families. Likewise, the more are the variants and diversities in socio-cultural aspects, the more are the secessionist tendencies for a separate statehood or even nationhood, being justified in future. Already, in India, we have precedents on the latter.

Thus, undoubtedly, as enshrined under the Directive Principles of State Policies, India must endeavour to accomplish a UCC throughout its entire territory.

**How do we prepare the ground work to take UCC forward.**

**Consolidating representative public opinion:**

The most important preparatory ground work is indefatigably, the constitution of an all-representative Plenary Committee comprising of Joint Parliamentary Members, the Law Minister, who shall be the Chairperson, members from the Law Commission, representatives from the political parties, religious groups and law boards, retired judicial officers, north-eastern state rural, clan and tribal representatives and eminent retired citizens.

The Plenary Committee will be solely responsible and empowered to formulate a draft UCC. It will oversee all the activities, feedback questionnaires, modus operando for feedback, awareness and publicity campaigns, etc.

The Law Commission must be empowered to be a nodal feedback office and they must expedite the collection, consolidation and compilation of the different and variant opinions and views of the people who are ultimately going to be affected by it.

Towards this goal, it must urge and motivate all the citizens, religious organizations, representative bodies, personal law boards, our elected representatives of the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies, Councils, Local Self Governance Bodies, our political parties and politicians, to send in their opinions in writing. To simplify the feedback, a standard objective questionnaire combined with a subjective format, would be desirable so that the survey process is structured.

The feedback questionnaire format to be approved by the Plenary Committee, must, inter alia include the following questions:

1. What are the existing laws in your religion, custom, or in India, which is not good for the society at all and which must be abolished all together?
2. What are the existing laws in your religion, custom or in India, which must be modified for the benefit of the society? What are the changes required?
3. What are the existing laws in your religion, custom or in India, which is good for the society, be retained and should never be abolished or modified?
4. What are the new laws, in your opinion, necessary for the society?

It is pertinent to note here that feedback given by individuals would be more relevant, reliable and authentic, when compared to that of a body, whose opinion and views are always its leaders'. Wide publicity campaigns and advertisements, throughout the

length and breadth of the country would be necessary. Special task forces may be entrusted with this job, in the rural areas and villages, where the efficacy of the awareness and campaigns are normally met with tepid and nonchalant responses.

The Law Commission, cannot on its own, with the existing organizational framework, complete the above task. So, the Union & State Governments must provide the additional infrastructure and resources. The cost of these, are to be borne by the Union Government.

What is the strategy for evolving a united political will for UCC? Undoubtedly, without a political will, more so, a united political will of the ruling and opposition parties, implementing a controversial subject like the UCC, is indisputably a case of running against a wall. Further, the ruling party doesn't have the required two-thirds majority in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, to push the legislation through, without a unified political will. However, with a unified political will in favour of an UCC, it is as simple as done. Thus, it is evident that the underlying strategy should be to achieve a unified political will through dialogues, exchanges, consultations and consensus. This has to be the basis of any progressive action.

The data base of the opinions and views of the nation must be laid bare before the Plenary Committee to further work on it towards a consensual finalized draft. This database must be categorized in to the following three sections.

i. Fully agreeable content.

ii. Partially agreeable content

iii. Disagreeable content.

The Plenary Committee may appoint sub-committees for the purpose of managing the task. To begin and set the ball rolling, work on the fully and partly agreeable content only. Attempt to bring in suitable modifications into section 2 so that as many partially agreeable contentsare brought into the fully agreeable content.

For the time being, leave aside the disagreeable content and allow it to remain as separate uncodified personal laws. Wisdom dictates that it is better left to be accomplished, later, if at all, absolutely imperative.

Though easier said than done, many sessions may be necessary to achieve the final goal. There must be a monitoring sub-committee to oversee and take the process to its final logical consensus, within a reasonable time frame of one year.

As trust and confidence measures, the ruling party must presently restrain itself from the compelling urge to implement UCC, on the lines of the Uttarakhand UCC, in its majority ruled states. This could be a back-up strategy, if the consensual approach

ends up in fiasco. Then, the ruling party is well justified in going ahead with the implementation in all its majority states, where it is in power with the required numbers, or otherwise.

Likewise, a constitutional amendment to bring civil law under the union list must also be pursued as a long-term sustenance measure, enabling the Union to promulgate a UCC, just like the uniform criminal laws and procedures. This would be plausible only if the opposition parties also come forward to support the ruling party, based on the positive and altruistic experience derived from the deliberations and outcome of the Plenary Committee.

## Conclusion

A UCC, would definitely augur well for the nation, a ViksitBharath by 2047, with its diverse religions, cultures, rituals and practices, allowed to be pursued at will, as a truly secular basis of our nationhood. Religion, though a fundamental driver of all cultures and traditions in India, cannot be allowed to come in the way of any administrative imperatives like the UCC, re-iterating the wisdom of the Father of our Constitution. If India is to become a truly global superpower, then religion must be relegated from its present dominant position in Indian societies. All political parties and our countrymen must realize this secular principle and minimize, if not eliminate, the fissiparous and secessionist ideological influences of religions on Indian societies. To conclude, finally, a uniform civil code would definitely augur well for the country, for our global economic growth and image abroad.

# ONE NATION, TWO POLLS: A BALANCED ELECTORAL REFORM

Author: K Ravindra Babu
February 2024

## Preamble

Frequent elections in India, while a testament to democratic vibrancy, carry substantial financial and administrative implications. Repeated electoral exercises consume considerable public resources, divert administrative machinery, and disrupt developmental activities. Governments and political parties remain in a perpetual campaign mode, often prioritizing electoral compulsions over governance and policy continuity. This recurring cycle adversely affects national productivity and conveys a somewhat primitive image of India's democratic processes.

The proposal for simultaneous elections seeks to address these challenges by holding polls to all three constitutional tiers namely Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the third tier of Panchayati Raj and Municipal Bodies, on a single day across the country.

## Influence of One Election on Another

Simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies could lead to the outcome of one influencing the other, as national and regional issues may become intertwined in the minds of voters. Furthermore, with approximately 22% of the population still illiterate, there exists a risk of voter confusion while selecting from two different sets of candidates at once, potentially leading to unintended voting patterns.

Another concern is that if both elections are held together every five years, the long gap between polls may induce complacency or even authoritarian tendencies among those in power. Hence, while the objective of efficiency is commendable, the approach must be nuanced.

## A Balanced Approach

A pragmatic solution would be to stagger the national and state elections with a clear and stable cycle. Elections to the Lok Sabha and State/UT Assemblies may be held separately with an exact gap of two and a half years.

Simultaneously, elections to Panchayati Raj and Municipal Bodies can coincide with the State/UT Assembly elections. This would significantly reduce the frequency of electoral activities while maintaining democratic checks and balance.

Accordingly, it is proposed that all State and Union Territory Assemblies hold their elections together, two and a half years after the Lok Sabha elections, thereby ensuring continuity in governance and reducing electoral disruptions.

### Elections to the Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Councils

To synchronize the upper houses with this cycle, it is proposed to reduce the term of Rajya Sabha and State Legislative Council members from six years to five years. These elections may be conducted. Within one month after the Lok Sabha elections for half the members, and Exactly two and a half years later for the remaining half.

Such a structure will ensure that both houses reflect the evolving public mandate within a five-year window. It would also allow ruling parties to attain legislative stability in the upper houses within their tenure and this arrangement will be beneficial for coherent policymaking and democratic accountability.

### Elections to the President and Vice President

Elections to the President and Vice President may be scheduled within two months after the combined elections to all State and UT Assemblies. This would ensure that each Union Government interacts with two distinct Heads of State during its tenure, reinforcing democratic rotation and balance.

### Constitutional Amendments Required

To institutionalize the above structure, constitutional amendments will be necessary to redefine:

The term of Lok Sabha and State Assemblies and the procedure for midterm elections and interim governance.

If a midterm election becomes unavoidable within the last 18 months of a House's original five-year term, an interim government may continue with limited powers until the completion of that term. During this period, all legislative decisions must be subject to secret electronic voting, ensuring transparency and reflecting the true will of the House. Voice voting may be suspended during this interim phase.

If midterm polls occur within the first 42 months of a House's term, the newly elected government would serve only the remainder of the original term for preserving the five-year cycle without overlap.

## Merging Elections of All States and UT Assemblies

Achieving synchronization of all State and UT Assembly elections in one go may not be feasible, as regional parties and sitting governments may resist curtailment or extension of their tenures. A gradual transition, therefore, appears most practical.

## The following phased approach is suggested:

1. Extension: Extend the term of certain State Governments by up to six months through an Act of Parliament.
2. Reduction: Shorten the term of some over-running State Assemblies by up to one year through legislation.
3. Voluntary Midterm Polls: States willing to dissolve early may hold elections alongside others in October 2026.
4. Second Phase: For remaining States, repeat the process in the next term so that by October 2031, elections to all State and UT Assemblies align simultaneously and take place exactly two and a half years after the Lok Sabha elections of April 2029.

States still misaligned after these two adjustments should be persuaded, in the larger national interest, to synchronize their elections from October 2031 onward.

## Conclusion

The "One Nation, Two Polls" framework offers a balanced and practicable middle path by way of retaining electoral accountability while minimizing governance disruption. By staggering national and state elections and restructuring upper house tenures, India can achieve cost efficiency, administrative stability, and democratic continuity without compromising the federal spirit.

# FREEBIES – CURRENT SCENARIO AND SUGGESTION FOR BETTERMENT

Author: K Ravindra.
Feb.2024

Reserve Bank of India defines Freebies; 'Freebies are a public welfare measure provided free of Charge'.

Cambridge dictionary definition: 'Something that is given to you without having to pay for it, especially a way of attracting your support for or interest in something'. The Indian Constitution provides for free education and legal advice but has no mention of 'freebie' or free benefits. The Constitution also mentions that the States shall consider their financial and economic capacities while launching a welfare programme.

However, competitive populism has caused the political parties to make unsustainable promises to the voters during elections like free electricity, public transport, water, waiver of farmers' loans etc. These can be broadly termed as freebies. Offering Freebies to voters is one way of political parties seeking to win elections or retain power.

## Deleterious effects of Freebies

a. Very broad criteria for availing the freebies are leading to misuse.

b. Resources are diverted from developmental and capital works which in turn limit employment generation.

c. Vested interests are created which then tend to skew and perpetuate the system.

d. The culture of freebies will automatically lead to irresponsible use of scarce resources.

e. Freebies destroy the work culture and disincentivise people from seeking employment.

f. Farmer loan waivers could have unintended repercussions like ruining the entire credit system.

g. The freebies by getting embedded into the system of governance will in the long run, undermine democracy. Freebies also negatively influence the decision-making by the voters.

h. States' financial balance sheets are adversely affected. The inflationary push of high deficits will negate the economic gains. The general public does neither understand nor appreciate the meaning of fiscal responsibility.

## The need to limit the Freebies

Faced with budgetary constraints the Govts resort to public debt in order to finance the planned expenditures. The FRBM Act limits the states' borrowings to 3% of GSDP. However, many states are by passing the limit on the pretext such as loans for corporations etc. This is leading to heavy debt and interest burden on States. It is left to the govts to balance between raising the taxes to unfeasible levels or taking on too much debt. As of 2024 – 25 the debt servicing accounts for approximately 18% of total expenditure in some states. The Table 1 provides a summary for 5 (five) states.

## A way forward

In our democratic system of governance some freebies may be needed. The Constitution empowers the Centre and the States make laws for the wellbeing of people and at the same time align the objectives with the Directive Principles.

a. As of 2024 – 25 a large number of people in India are still below official poverty line, approx. 11.28% of 1.45 billion population (BPL). Uplifting this section of population is imperative so that they can participate in the country's governance and contribute to development.

b. The Constitution and the Directive Principles require as well as empower the Govt of India and its citizens to strive (the actual word used by Dr. Ambedkar) for;

   i. Ensuring social and political justice

   ii. Minimise social inequalities, inequalities in status and opportunities.

   iii. Securing an adequate means of livelihood as well as equal pay for equal work to both men and women.

   iv. Prevention of child abuse and exploitation of workers.

The following shall be ensured by the Central and State governments as a part of their constitutional obligations:

a) Education for the children age group 6-14 years

b) Universal Primary healthcare and specialised medical services to BPL families

c) Alleviation of hunger and malnutrition.

d) Employment generation schemes.

e) Shelter for all.

The expenditure incurred for the above shall be considered as necessary and not as subsidy or freebie.

Specifically, the following could be considered for free provision:

i. Electricity to BPL families and economically weaker sections subject to limit of per capita electricity consumption in 2022-23 of 1331 Kwh per year.

ii. Education for children in age group 05-18 years.

iii. Mid-day meals and educational aids like laptops to students.

iv. Monthly monetary support to women with proper criteria.

v. Healthcare.

   a. GOI's Ayushman Bharat, Andhra Pradesh Govt's 'Aarogyasri' under Universal Health Care policy are two of such schemes.

   b. Employees State Insurance (ESIC) scheme can be strengthened to cover more population.

**Ways to rein in the runaway freebie culture:**

i. Political parties promising freebies during election campaign must explain the expected expenditure and plan to finance them.

ii. The source the funds for freebies shall be from State's revenue surplus and not public debt.

iii. Freebies shall not be in form of cash/money transfer.

iv. Strict eligibility criteria for availing freebies.

v. The National Census planned by GOI in 2026 (to be ready before 2029 General Elections) could form the basis for eligibility for freebies.

vi. Independent audit of Freebies budget in order to monitor commitment.

vii. There must be a sunset clause for freebies. They must not be continued without sufficient cause.

**Where the freebie budget be directed**

a. Only essential services / amenities shall be covered under freebies and shall be met equally by State and Central Govts. GOI subsidizes crop insurance under PM's Bima Fasal Yojana.

b. The Central and State Govts have the right to create a subsidy or a freebie regime for their own agenda/objectives. However, the eligibility criteria shall be properly enforced so that the expenditure justifies the objectives.

**Table 1**

## The state wise budgets in FY 2024 – 25 (RE), in Rs. Crores

| S. No. | Descri ption | Andhra Pradesh | Gujarat | Karnataka | Odisha | Telangana | Remarks |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Total Expenditure | 274608 | 312588 | 365865 | 265000 | 265935 | 2025 26 BE is not considered |
| 2 | Revenue Expenditure | 224343 | 283902 | 283928 | 186065 | 196219 | Odisha budget has only monetary assistance |
| 3 (a) | Debt repayment | 25190 | 29086 | 24974 | 21092 | 17101 | |
| 3 (b) | Interest payment | 30944 | NA | 36633 | 5500 | 17730 | |
| 4 | Subtotal (3a+3b) | 56134 | 29086 | 61607 | 26592 | 34831 | |
| 5 | As % of Total exp. | 20.44% | 9.3% | 16.84% | 10.03% | 13.10% | |
| 6 | As % of revenue exp. | 25.02% | 10.24% | 21.7% | 14.29% | 17.75 % | |
| 7 | Capital outlay | 24072 | 70173 | 56963 | 78934 | 33088 | |
| 8 | Fiscal deficit as % of State GDP | 4.6% | 1.9% | 2.9% | 3.1% | 2.9% | |

# CASTE CENSUS

Author: G Ramachandra
Oct. 2025

Reassessing reservation frameworks aims to reflect current caste realities, improve inclusion, and enable targeted development. Politically, it may lead to demands for updated policies and shift electoral strategies based on revised demographics. Socially, it could empower marginalized groups but also risk inter-caste tensions. Challenges include complex caste categorization, legal hurdles, and privacy concerns. Critics warn of political misuse, fraudulent claims, and dissatisfaction among forward castes. Ensuring credibility requires expert-backed caste lists, digital integration, AI tools for analysis, strong data security, and transparent grievance redressal systems.

**Way Forward:**

**Scientific Classification:** Due to the large number of castes and sub-castes across different states, it is essential to establish a uniform system for their categorization. A standardized framework will help ensure consistency, improve data accuracy, and facilitate better implementation of policies related to social justice. Minor sub-castes that are less represented or have limited data can be thoughtfully merged with the most closely related major caste groups, based on cultural, social, and historical similarities. This process should be carried out in consultation with local experts, community leaders, and sociologists to ensure that the identities and interests of these groups are respected and preserved.

**Transparent Methodology:** It is crucial to carefully select enumerators, as their understanding of caste dynamics plays a vital role in ensuring accurate and sensitive data collection. Training must be provided to all enumerators, not only on the complexities of caste and sub-caste classifications but also on the technical aspects of the digital data collection process. Leveraging advanced digital tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning (ML), and Geographic Positioning System (GPS) technologies can significantly enhance the accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the data. These tools can assist in identifying patterns, reducing manual errors, and ensuring geo-tagged verification of the information collected on the ground.

**Data Verification:** For proper verification of caste, involvement of local village management and community representatives is essential to enhance transparency and

local accountability. To prevent duplication and ensure the uniqueness of individual records, integration of Aadhaar with Voter ID should be implemented. This linkage will not only streamline identity verification but also support the creation of a more robust and error-free database.

**Constitutional Validity:** All policy reforms, especially those related to sensitive issues like caste categorization and identity verification should be subject to thorough judicial and parliamentary review. Together, these processes ensure that reforms are not only legally sound but also socially inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

**Fair & Inclusive Reservation:** Reservation policy should not be based solely on caste, as emerging data — such as the Bihar caste survey — indicates that a significant number of individuals from upper caste groups also fall below the poverty line. This highlights the need for a more holistic and inclusive approach. Therefore, it is imperative to consider a combination of factors including caste, income level, and overall social and educational backwardness when determining eligibility for reservation. Such a multi-dimensional framework would ensure that benefits reach the truly disadvantaged across all communities, promoting equity and social justice in a more effective and targeted manner.

**Decentralized Reservation Frame work (State-Specific Reservation Model):** Each state exhibits unique socio-economic conditions and varying levels of development among different caste groups. A uniform, one-size-fits-all reservation policy across all states may therefore fail to address the specific needs and realities of different regions, potentially resulting in unfair or ineffective distribution of benefits. To ensure equity and justice, it is essential to design state-specific reservation policies that reflect the local demographic, economic, and social context. This decentralized approach will allow for more precise targeting of disadvantaged groups and promote balanced regional development.

**Monitoring:** To ensure the effective implementation and long-term credibility of the reservation policy, mechanisms for annual audits, transparent budget allocation, and accountability of government employees must be institutionalized. Regular audits will help assess the impact and efficiency of the policy, while proper budget planning will ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for its execution. Additionally, involving credible non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the implementation and monitoring process can enhance transparency, bring in community participation, and provide grassroots-level insights. Together, these measures will promote greater accountability, minimize misuse, and ensure that the intended benefits of the reservation policy reach the truly deserving sections of society.

**Reservation policy:** It is time to transition from caste-based reservations to a more merit-driven, socio-economic-based system that supports individuals irrespective of their caste. True social justice should prioritize the economically disadvantaged and focus on uplifting them through opportunity rather than entitlement. Governments should shift their focus toward investing in skill-oriented, self-employment schemes that empower people to become self-reliant, rather than continuing to expand reservation and freebie-based policies. The ultimate goal should be to create a society where affirmative action becomes unnecessary—by ensuring equal access to education, skills, and employment for all, thereby moving towards a future with minimal reliance on reservation.

# JUDICIAL REFORMS TOWARDS GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND EFFICIENCY

Author: K Ravindra Babu
March 2025.

## Background

Reforming the administrative aspects of the judiciary is crucial to enhancing efficiency, transparency, and accessibility. Key areas that require improvement include the selection and appointment of judges, retirement age, working hours, holidays, transfers, salaries, performance evaluation, infrastructure, and the use of modern technology.

## Judges For Subordinate courts

Currently, the selection of judges for subordinate courts is done through a qualifying examination conducted by state-level judicial public service commissions. While reservations as per constitutional provisions should be implemented, it is essential to maintain a high standard. The minimum qualifying marks for reserved categories should not be less than 75% of the qualifying mark set for the open category.

To ensure adequate representation, state governments should provide free coaching if there is a shortage of candidates for filling reserved posts. Since these are entry-level positions, selection should be based purely on merit, along with medical fitness and a clean criminal record. Once the merit list is published, further appointments, postings, transfers, and promotions should be handled by the High Court collegium, ensuring independence from political influence.

## High Court Judges Appointments

For High Court judges and corresponding legal officers, a Union Judicial Service Commission (UJSC) should be established to conduct a national-level qualifying examination, similar to the UPSC civil services exam. The eligibility criteria should be in line with the current requirements for High Court judges. This examination should be held annually, with a validity period of one year for the merit list. Every candidate should be allowed up to three attempts in their lifetime.

Merit order in the qualifying examination should be the primary criterion for appointments, alongside medical fitness and an unblemished track record. If a candidate is rejected for reasons other than merit, a written explanation must be

provided with valid supporting reports. This transparent system will eliminate the drawbacks of the collegium system and provide equal opportunities for all eligible candidates. The executive's involvement should be limited to the examination process, while the High Court and Supreme Court collegiums handle appointments and postings.

### Postings and Transfers

Appointments and transfers of High Court judges should follow a structured timeline rather than being a prolonged process. All postings, promotions, and transfers should occur only on two fixed dates annually namely on January 1st and July 1st and these dates should be as sacrosanct as Independence Day and Republic Day. If these dates fall on holidays, the previous working day should be used.

In case of a sudden vacancy in the Chief Justice position of a High Court, the senior-most judge should serve as the acting Chief Justice until a permanent appointment is made.

### Supreme Court Justices

For Supreme Court appointments, judges should be selected from High Court judges who have already cleared the qualifying examination. Additionally, legal officers serving in High Courts and the Supreme Court should also be considered, provided they have passed the National Judicial Service Commission (NJSC) qualifying examination.

Although some Supreme Court judges are currently appointed directly from the Bar, such appointments should only be allowed if the candidate has cleared the NJSC exam within the last five years. This will eliminate arbitrary selections and ensure only the most qualified individuals become Justices. The Supreme Court collegium should have the final say in these appointments.

### Retirement Age and Holidays

The current retirement age of 65 years appears reasonable and should remain unchanged. India's climate is conducive to year-round work, except for a small part of Kashmir and Ladakh. However, the judiciary operates differently from other government offices, as most hearings involve groups of judges rather than individual ones. Since their collective presence is crucial, a structured holiday system should be introduced.

Instead of long summer vacations, the judiciary should have three vacation periods of 10 days each, providing judges and staff the opportunity to attend to personal matters without disrupting court operations.

### Working Hours

The working hours of courts should be increased from 40 hours to 44 hours per week, with holidays on Sundays and the 2nd and 4th Saturdays. This will enhance productivity while maintaining a balanced workload.

### Salaries

Judges' salaries should be on par with top civil servants to attract and retain high-quality talent.

### Assets Declaration

To maintain judicial integrity, all judges and judicial officers should be required to declare their family assets annually. These declarations should be scrutinized, and if disproportionate assets are found, appropriate disciplinary action, including dismissal, should be taken. However, this process must be handled internally within the judiciary, not by external agencies like Lokpal or CVC, to preserve judicial independence. However the services of central investigating agencies like CBI can be availed, if required, by the internal investigating team.

### Technology and Infrastructure

Technology should be extensively used to improve efficiency and reduce delays. Artificial Intelligence (AI) can expedite legal processes by automating tasks such as document analysis and case scheduling. AI-based dictation software should replace stenographers, ensuring faster and more confidential transcription of judgments.

Many subordinate courts lack proper infrastructure. Investments must be made in building well-equipped courtrooms and facilities to ensure smooth judicial operations. Additionally, the backlog of cases must be addressed through special courts, fast-track courts, and more Lok Adalats. Able-bodied retired judges should be re-employed as required to speed up case resolution.

### Alternate Dispute Resolution

Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms should be strengthened and encouraged as an effective parallel system to ease the burden on regular courts. Furthermore, a strict time limit for delivering judgments after hearings must be enforced, and the practice of indefinitely reserving judgments should be abolished.

## Adjournments, Rostering and Jury system

The allocation of judges to cases should be fully automated, eliminating human interference to ensure fairness and transparency. This will prevent biases and manipulation in case assignments.

A rational limit should be placed on adjournments. Some cases have seen thousands of adjournments, leading to prolonged delays. This practice must be curtailed, and adjournments should only be granted under exceptional circumstances.

Several advanced countries follow the jury system, where legal experts assist judges in decision-making. Introducing a modified jury system in India could enhance the quality of judgments and speed up case disposal.

## Conclusion

Judicial reforms are essential for ensuring fair, efficient, and transparent administration of justice. By establishing a National Judicial Service Commission, standardizing appointment procedures, increasing working hours, modernizing infrastructure, and implementing AI-driven solutions, India's judiciary can be transformed into a system that serves justice swiftly and equitably.

A robust and independent judiciary is the foundation of democracy. These reforms will ensure that judicial appointments are merit-based, corruption-free, and transparent, while also improving working conditions and reducing case backlogs. The time has come for a new era of judicial efficiency and fairness, paving the way for a justice system that truly serves the people.

# REFORMS IN VOTER ENROLMENT & VOTER LIST UP-DATION

Author: K Ravindra Babu
October, 2025.

## Background

The Election Commission of India (ECI), a permanent constitutional body established under Article 324 of the Constitution, plays a pivotal role in strengthening democracy. Headed by a Chief Election Commissioner and supported by two Election Commissioners, the ECI is entrusted with conducting free and fair elections across the nation. One of its core responsibilities is issuing Voter Identification Cards (Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) ) to eligible citizens.

According to law, every Indian citizen aged 18 years and above except those disqualified due to unsoundness of mind, corrupt electoral practices, or conviction for certain offences has the right to vote. Applications for voter ID can be submitted online through the ECI portal or through physical forms with local authorities. Periodic door-to-door visits are also conducted by government representatives to update the voter rolls.

## Special Intensive Revision:

In recent months, the ECI undertook a "Special Intensive Revision" of electoral rolls in Bihar. This exercise triggered political controversy, with opposition parties alleging large-scale irregularities. The concerns raised include:

1. Deletion of around 65 lakh voters without reasonable justification.
2. Incorrect removal of living voters under the pretext of death.
3. Several of new voters without proper house numbers.
4. Presence of several duplicate voter IDs.

These allegations highlightcertain structural gaps in the current system of enrolment and updating.

## Duplicate Voter IDs:

A recurring problem in India's electoral process is the duplication of voter IDs. Citizens often end up with more than one EPIC due to frequent transfers, changes in residence, or job relocations. For decades, cancellation of old voter IDs was never treated as a strict prerequisite before issuing a new one.For example, a citizen who misplaces an old voter ID while relocating may not be able to furnish details for deletion. Even when

requested, cancellation of old entries may take months. Consequently, some individuals possess more than one valid voter ID simultaneously, though at different addresses.

### Linking of Aadhar:

To address these issues, one strong reform measure would be making Aadhaar mandatory for voter enrolment and linking it with EPIC. This is in addition to the other essential documents, required to prove citizenship. Aadhar is not considered as the proof of citizenship, and it is only the unique identity document for ordinary resident. This reform would serve two vital purposes:

i. Eliminating duplicates: Aadhaar-linked enrolment would allow authorities to cross-check existing EPIC data, cancel old IDs, and ensure one citizen has only one voter ID. Cancellation of old IDs should be a mandatory prerequisite before issuing a new EPIC at a new address. Where Aadhaar linkage alone is insufficient, duplicate entries could be identified using advanced AI-based photo and data-matching tools.

ii. Preventing impersonation: Aadhaar authentication, particularly through biometrics, can eventually be used to verify voters during polling, thereby eliminating impersonation. Initially, Aadhaar-linkage should focus on enrolment, with biometric verification introduced gradually. However, precautions are essential to prevent misuse of Aadhaar data belonging to deceased persons, as many such Aadhars are yet to be deactivated.

### Option for Migrant workers:

Under current rules, a person can be enrolled as a voter in a constituency only if he is an "Ordinarily Resident", meaning he actually lives there with the intention of staying for a significant period. Students, transferable employees, and defence personnel are already provided with special provisions.

However, migrant workers face uncertainty. Many workers reside at their place of employment for most of the year and visit their native homes only occasionally. In such cases, they should be allowed to exercise an option to register their native place (where they have a permanent dwelling) as the address for voter enrolment. With this provision, deletion of their names from voter list having native place as the address should not be automatic, on the ground that the voter is not an ordinary resident at the native place. A structured option-declaration process will ensure they remain registered at only one address while preventing wrongful deletions.

### Deletion on Death:

One major concern in electoral rolls is the continued presence of deceased voters. Currently, their removal relies on family reporting or periodic door-to-door verification, which is both slow and prone to errors.

If Aadhaar deactivation upon death is implemented effectively, deletion from voter lists would become an automatic and seamless process. This reform would reduce errors, prevent misuse of IDs, and improve the overall credibility of electoral rolls.

### Slum Dwellers:

Another issue is enrolment of citizens living in slums or informal settlements where dwelling units do not have official door numbers. In recent revisions, many new entries appeared without proper house numbers, causing doubts about their authenticity.

For such citizens, Aadhaar combined with GPS/GNSS coordinates of their residence can serve as proof of address. Assigning voter IDs based on these coordinates would ensure inclusivity while preventing misuse of the system.

### Conclusion:

India, with its population of over 140 crores, must ensure that its democratic foundation remains strong and credible. Voter enrolment and electoral rolls form the backbone of free and fair elections. The following reforms are therefore critical:

1. Aadhaar linked enrolment: Make Aadhaar mandatory for voter ID enrolment in addition to the other essential document/s confirming the citizenship, and ensure one-to-one linkage between Aadhaar and EPIC.
2. Prerequisite deletion of old EPICs: Old voter IDs must be cancelled and deleted from the voter lists well before issuing new ones.
3. Migrant voter flexibility:

   By default, the place of ordinary residence will be the address for enrolment of voter Id. However migrant workers and transferable employees should have the option to choose their native place and the corresponding address for voter registration, with mandatory declaration.
4. Inclusion of slum dwellers: Use Aadhaar and GPS-based location mapping for citizens without official house numbers.
5. Automatic deletion of deceased voters: Link voter list up-dation with Aadhaar deactivation upon death of a voter.

The recent controversies in Bihar highlight the urgent need for reforms in India's voter enrolment and up-dation system. While political allegations will continue, it is essential for the Election Commission to adopt robust technological solutions that ensure accuracy, inclusivity, and transparency. under verification, they highlight structural gaps in the current system of enrolment and up-dation.

# CHALLENGES TO VIKSIT BHARAT @ 2047 MISSION

Author: K A Subhas
Nov 2025

**Summary:** Viksit Bharat@2047 is the vision of Government of India to make India a fully developed, global superpower to reckon with and one of the top economically powerful nations by 2047, in the 100th year of its independence. The vision encompasses various aspects of development, including economic growth, social progress, environmental sustainability, and good governance.

A central tenet of the Viksit Bharat Vision is the ambitious target of elevating India's per capita income to between USD 15,000 and USD 18,000 and the GDP to plus USD 30 trillion, the current figures being USD 2800 and USD 4 trillion.

Key to this transformation is the active participation of India's youth, who are seen as both the agents and the recipients of change.

The existence of multiple frameworks—four human capital pillars, six cultural pillars, and five themes—suggests a comprehensive and multifaceted strategic approach. However, ensuring effective coordination and coherence across these various layers will be paramount for the successful realization of the Viksit Bharat vision.

This informational article broadly identifies the gaps between the present scenario and our Mission. The Hon'ble FM in her Union Budget has brought out the gaps in the economic key factors. From these gaps, the challenges emerge which clearly outlines the areas of concern on the road to Viksit Bharat 2047. Specific recommendations have been hinted without elaboration, as these are beyond the scope of this informational report. This paper concludes with a note that equally significant, if not more, is the holistic well-being and happiness of our youth, at par with growth and developemt.

**Mission objectives of Viksit Bharat.** Viksit Bharat 2047 is the government's vision to transform the country into a self-reliant and prosperous economy by 2047. Economic growth, technological upgradation, infrastructure development, social empowerment, and sustainability are the criteria of this program.

### Framework of foundation pillars for Viksit Bharat 2047 Mission.

At its core, are the pillars of human capital based on four classes of our citizens:

Yuva (Youth), Garib (Poor), Mahilayen (Women) and Annadata (Farmers).

Additionally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has articulated six focus-based foundation pillars for Viksit Bharat, emphasizing the specific areas of focus.

i. making India a global manufacturing hub.

ii. reviving the glory of Indian knowledge systems,

iii. ensuring global presence of Indian products,

iv. powering green energy,

v. expanding tourism, and

vi. promoting inclusive global development.

The Ministry of Culture also aims to make India's cultural sector a key pillar of the Viksit Bharat vision:

“An India that is economically advanced, socially cohesive, and globally respected for its cultural leadership, by leveraging its rich heritage, promoting inclusive participation, and driving innovation”, aimed at;

i. Preservation of Bharat’s 10,000+ Years of Cultural Heritage.

ii. Democratizing access and participation in the cultural sector.

iii. Leveraging technology in arts and culture.

iv. Establishing India as a global leader in the cultural & creative economy.

v. Positioning Bharat as a global cultural friend (Vishwabandhu).

Furthermore, the Mission is structured around five broad themes that provide a comprehensive approach to achieving its objectives:

i. Empowered Indians,

ii. Thriving and Sustainable Economy,

iii. Innovation, Science and Technology,

iv. Good Governance and Security, and

v. India in the World.

These themes encompass various aspects of national development, from human capital to economic growth and international relations. In terms of specific sectors, Viksit Bharat prioritizes agriculture, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), investment, and exports as key drivers of economic transformation. The manufacturing and services sectors are also considered crucial for achieving the desired growth

trajectory. The initiative also strategically focuses on 'sunrise sectors' such as digital public infrastructure, renewable energy, and overall technological advancement to propel India into the future.

**Present human capital scenario.**

**Poverty.** In one of the most remarkable achievements of the past decade, India has lifted 171 million people out of extreme poverty between 2011 and 2023. The World Bank acknowledges India's decisive fight against poverty in its Spring 2025 Poverty and Equity Brief.

According to the report, the proportion of people living on less than 2.15 US dollars a day, which is the international benchmark for extreme poverty, fell sharply from 16.2 percent in 2011-12 to just 2.3 percent in 2022-23.

**Income inequality.** India's consumption Gini index in 2025 is 25.5, placing it among the most equal societies globally, indicating a reduction in income inequality.

According to the World Bank's 2025 report, India ranks fourth upon 167 nations worldwide in income equality, with a Gini index of 25.5. This score reflects a relatively low level of inequality in consumption and income distribution, surpassed only by the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, and Belarus.

**Women Empowerment.** Reservation of 33% of the seats in the Lok Sabha and in the state assemblies and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam guaranteeing quotas to SC and ST women are promoting women's leadership.

Efforts towards financial inclusion have seen over 28 crore women opening Jan Dhan accounts, and most of the beneficiaries of PM Mudra Yojana and Stand-Up India are women.

Education. The National Education Policy, 2020, replaced that of 1986. About Rs. 630 crores have been disbursed as the first instalment for the chosen PM SHRI schools, and 12 institutions have been announced as Institutions of Eminence.

Initiatives like Nishtha Teachers' Holistic Education, Vidyanjali Mentoring, and Nipun Bharat emphasize foundational literacy, adaptive curricula, and credit-based learning, Skill India Mission, PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana, SAMARTH Udyog Centres have upskilled millions, preparing the workforce for Industry 4.0.

More than 10,000 Atal Tinkering Labs nationwide encourage scientific temperament, while the first National Sports University in Manipur is a milestone achievement.

**Housing, water and sanitary improvements.** PM Awas Yojana (Gramin) has provided more than 2.5 crore houses, while SBM Gramin and its Phase II have enhanced sanitation through large-scale toilet construction and women-led waste management.

Urban schemes like AMRUT have enhanced water and sewer connections and enabled green spaces, and Har Ghar Jal is supplying tap water to every rural household.

**Healthcare.** The PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission and Digital Mission are strengthening public healthcare and digital connectivity, with thousands of health centers and millions of registered health accounts.

Initiatives such as e-Sanjeevani OPD and PM Jan Aushadhi Yojana enhance the accessibility and affordability of quality care and medicines.

Initiatives in organ donation and rehabilitation of drug dependents through the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan and the Child Health and Nutrition Mission Indradhanush are leading to a sustainable healthcare ecosystem in India.

**National Security.** The country's robust defiance capabilities are attested by the induction of indigenously developed Light Combat Helicopters and the pioneering Agnipath scheme, which modernizes the armed forces with young, high-tech soldiers.

The sharp reduction in insurgent incidents as well as successfully executed surgical strikes indicate India's success with its counter terrorism measures.

**Economic Development.** India in 2025 has emerged as the world's 4th largest economy, growing at around 6.4–6.5% annually, with strong export performance, rising FDI, and landmark reforms driving stability and investor confidence. It remains the fastest-growing major economy, with real GDP growth at 6.4% in FY25, projected between 6.3–6.8% in FY26. Nominal GDP tripled in a decade: from ₹106.57 lakh crore (2014–15) to ₹331.03 lakh crore (2024–25). Growth is driven by domestic reforms, digitalization, and global positioning under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat. Total exports rose 76% over the last decade, reaching US$ 825 billion in 2024–25. Services exports doubled, from US$ 158 billion (2013–14) to US$ 387 billion (2024–25), led by IT, finance, and professional services. Export strength lies in engineering goods, electronics, and pharmaceuticals. Cumulative FDI inflows crossed US$ 1.05 trillion, with a record 27% increase in equity inflows in FY25's first 9 months. Reforms in 2025 provided clarity in fiscal, monetary, and regulatory frameworks, boosting investor confidence. Digital transactions surged 9x between FY18–FY24. 2025 marked a decisive break from piecemeal reforms, with coherent fiscal and regulatory strategies, with focus on manufacturing competitiveness, infrastructure, and financial stability.

The Export Promotion Mission (EPM) & Credit Guarantee Scheme For Exporters (CGSE) has been approved by the Union Cabinet in Nov 2025, with a total outlay of Rs.25000 Cr for EPM and Rs.20000 Cr for CGSE.

**Agriculture.** Foodgrain production hit a record 353.2 million tons in 2024-25 FY, up 6% from the previous year. Rice and wheat saw strong growth due to favourable monsoons and improved yields. Pulses and oilseeds also registered significant increases, reducing import dependence.

Currently, India is the largest rice and pulses producer, second and third largest in wheat production and cereals respectively. Several schemes such as PM KISAN, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, and Soil Health Cards ensure financial security and protection against crop loss risk, benefiting crores of farmers.

The government has also emphasized the development of irrigation facilities through PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana and agricultural infrastructure development with a Rs. 1 lakh crore funding facility.

Schemes such as Kisan Credit Cards, the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, and the SVAMITVA scheme are designed to empower farmers with better resources, enhanced credit availability, and enhanced titles.

The PM-PRANAM scheme promotes organic farming and sustainable fertiliser use, improving the vision of a prosperous, self-reliant agriculture sector.

Fisheries and aquaculture are among India's fastest growing food producing factors. Agencies such as ICAR, MPEDA, NFDB, have all promoted innovation and best practices, while the Coastal Aquaculture Authority has regulated coastal activities to ensure environmental compliance. The Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) has driven production growth, particularly, in inland and brackish water aquaculture, while improving safety, regulation and resilience in fisheries.

**Infrastructure.** The development of infrastructure in India has increased through initiatives like PM Gati Shakti, which enhances the transport of goods and services and employment generation and improves citizens' lives. India's infrastructure is marked by rapid expansion in transport, energy, and digital connectivity, but uneven progress in areas like EV charging and rural logistics remains a challenge. National Highways expanded by 60% between 2014–2025, reaching 146,204 km, with construction pace rising to 34 km/day (up from 11.6 km/day in 2014). Through Bharat Mala Road Project: 26,425 km awarded while 20,378 km has been constructed. Railways have introduced 70 Vande Bharat trains now operate across 333 districts. 45,000 route km has been electrified, while railway safety technologies like Kavach has been deployed partly. 88 airports are operational under the UDAN Scheme.

**Sustainability.** India is now the 4th largest in the world in terms of installed renewable energy capacity, with solar capacity growing exponentially and a record low solar tariff of Rs. 1.99 per unit achieved.

The Global Biofuel Alliance, is leading the way in the use of sustainable biofuels around the world.

The GOBARdhan scheme is encouraging waste-to-energy solutions, converting agricultural waste to biogas and compost.

Through the PM-KUSUM scheme, India is empowering farmers with solar energy solutions. At the same time, the One Sun, One World, One Grid initiative plans to develop a global grid for solar energy, encouraging sustainable growth on the world map.

### Strategic enabling factors for Viksit Bharat 2047

This ambitious goal imperatively requires four key strategic economic pillars, viz, economic competitiveness and growth, national security and stability, global partnerships and strategic influence, and legal reforms and good governance.

**Economic Competitiveness and Growth** will be at the core of India's development strategy. To enhance productivity, the country must streamline regulatory processes, improve the ease of doing business, and foster innovation through research and technological advancements.

A focus on sustainable growth is critical, involving the adoption of eco-friendly technologies and circular economy models to ensure environmental resilience in the long term. Additionally, India must invest in expanding infrastructure and embracing digital transformation, including AI-driven automation and smart city development, to improve economic efficiency and growth.

**National Security and Stability** is another foundational pillar for India's transformation. A strong security framework is essential for long-term peace and prosperity. This involves modernizing defence forces, enhancing cybersecurity infrastructure, and improving border security. Strengthening internal security to address threats such as terrorism, cyber attacks and internal conflicts is crucial.

**Global Partnerships and Strategic Influence** will be key to securing resources, enhancing technological capabilities, and improving India's geopolitical standing. Strengthening diplomatic ties, expanding trade partnerships, and actively engaging in international organizations will enable India to position itself as a leader in global

governance. Collaboration with global firms through technology transfer agreements can help boost India's manufacturing and defence sectors.

**Legal Reforms and Good Governance** are essential to ensure that the country's growth is transparent, efficient, and equitable. India must prioritize judicial efficiency by streamlining court processes to reduce delays and enhance the legal system's capacity. Simplifying regulatory frameworks will create a more conducive environment for business operations. Anti-corruption measures must be strengthened to improve public trust and promote good governance. These reforms will help India achieve greater accountability, boost investor confidence, and encourage public participation in the country's progress.

The above multifaceted and intrinsically integrated framework of foundations highlights economic, cultural and strategic pillars of the mission. These pillars are interconnected, and achieving success in one area will significantly contribute to progress in the others, helping to create an economically developed, resilient, inclusive, and globally powerful India.

### Gaps identified in Union Budget 2025-26 by Finance Minister.

The Union Budget 2025-26 brings a series of initiatives in accordance with the 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision to make India a prosperous and self-reliant nation by its 100th anniversary of independence. Major announcements are

**Income Tax Reforms:** To generate domestic demand and accelerate economic growth, the government has raised the personal income tax exemption limit to 12 lakh from 8 lakh. This would increase household consumption, savings, and investments.

**Agricultural Development:** A high-yield crop scheme to benefit 17 million farmers has been launched to enhance agricultural productivity. The budget proposes increasing subsidized credit to farmers and increasing sustainable farming practices.

**Support for MSMEs and Startups:** The budget focuses on boosting credit for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and startups through enhanced credit guarantee schemes. This initiative aims to foster innovation and entrepreneurship, contributing to economic growth.

**Infrastructure Investment:** The government plans to modestly increase capital spending to develop infrastructure, stimulate economic activity, and create job opportunities. This includes transportation, energy, and digital infrastructure investments to support long-term growth.

Steps towards achieving this were charted in the Union Budget 2025-26, as Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a few priorities to create opportunities and drive progress in accordance with the overall strategy outlined in the interim budget.

i. Zero-poverty

ii. Hundred per cent good quality school education

iii. Access to high-quality, affordable, and comprehensive healthcare

iv. Hundred per cent skilled labor with meaningful employment

v. Seventy per cent of women in economic activities;

vi. Farmers making our country the 'food basket of the world'

While the present wholistic scenarios and the strategic road map as explained above would definitely stand in good stead to achieving the Viksit Bharat Mission by 2047, nevertheless it is not without the flip sides. It is imperative to accept, understand the challenges and work towards their mitigation, if not elimination.

### The challenges to Viksit Bharat 2047

1. **Income & wealth inequality:** In India, income inequality is a pressing issue. The country is home to a significant population with a wide gap between the rich and the poor. This wealth divide presents challenges to social cohesion and inclusive growth.

   In India, the CEO-to-worker salary gap has widened dramatically from 2000 to 2025. In 2000, CEOs earned roughly 30–50 times more than average workers; by 2025, that ratio has ballooned to over 300–400 times in many sectors.

   Wealth concentration and growth have radically skewed adversely in favour of the wealthy rather than the lower social stratum. 22% of India's wealth is in the top 1% of the rich, 65% of it is in top 10%, the middle holding about 30-35% and finally, the bottom 50% just having 6-7%. This skewed wealth accumulation has been increasing steadily from the 1980s, the trend still continuing, with a greater rise, painstakingly corroborating the capitalist ideological demerit of the, "rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer", not in absolute but on comparative terms. The widening pay gap reflects deeper issues in income inequality and access to opportunity.

   **Recommendations:**

   i. The concept of a universal basic income to all must be seriously taken up. This concept is not new and it is prudent to revisit for a fair and just

implementation. This should not be seen as a freebie measure during elections, rather from the income inequality perspective.

ii. Worker compensation increase must be commensurate with productivity increase.

iii. Worker compensation and wages must be fair and sustainable for both the firm and the worker's family.

iv. Examine the disparity which reflects broader structural issues in India's labour market—such as informal employment, low minimum wages, and limited collective bargaining.

v. It's earnestly expected that the new labour codes effective from April 2026 would favourably and positively reduce the income inequalities and disparities.

vi. Enforce inclusive economic growth, wage reforms, and corporate accountability to ensure equitable wealth distribution.

vii. Profit-sharing by firms amongst their employees would definitely augur well for both the firm and the workforce.

## 2. Education Quality, Skill Gap & Employability.

Although India has made strides in increasing literacy rates, the quality of education remains inconsistent, especially in rural areas. The skill gap between what the education system provides and what the job market demands is widening. India's employability ratio has shown gradual improvement over the past decade, rising from around 33% in 2014 to approximately 50% by 2024, with notable gains in certain sectors and regions.

### Recommendations:

i. While religious schools can be allowed to function in India, they, must be monitored and governed by State Education Boards, to ensure that the curricula and activities are in harmony with nationalist ideologies and benefits.

ii. More state outlay on primary and secondary education to increase literacy and create quality skilled work force.

iii. Primary education needs to be in the vernacular or mother tongue, as envisaged in the National Education Policy.

iv. Full implementation of the NEP in India, taking on-board the opposition ruled states and their education departments.

v. The Annual Status of Education Report 2023-24 highlights 25% of class 5 students cannot read class 2 texts, 54% cannot do basic division, reflect radical interventions needed to improve the ground realities in the primary and middle school education.

vi. 9.4 lakh vacancies in teaching staff remains unfilled due to funding issues related to deficit educational budget allocation by states.

## 3. Unemployment and Underemployment:

Unemployment and underemployment pose growing challenges in India, compounded by population growth, particularly among the youth. The government faces the ongoing task of creating sufficient job opportunities to accommodate the expanding labour force.

India's unemployment rate has shown a positive trend, with the rate declining to 5.2% in July 2025 from 5.6% in June 2025.

This decline is a sign of recovery in both rural and urban job markets. However, the youth unemployment rate remains a concern, with 13.8% among individuals aged 15 to 29 years.

Kerala reported the highest youth unemployment rate at 29.9%, with a significant percentage among females. Madhya Pradesh had the lowest youth unemployment rate at 3.2%, followed closely by Gujarat.

Female LFPR at 37%, is one of the lowest globally, overall LFPR at 57% below global peer nations. 85-90% of the workforce is in the informal sector, with the gig workforce estimated at 8 million today.

### Recommendations:

i. Initiate measures that create meaningful employment alongside economic expansion highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address the challenges faced by the workforce.

ii. With the advent of AI and full automation in the manufacturing, services, IT, etc sectors, 29% of jobs are at risks of non-existence. Anticipate and have a plan in place to address the issue.

iii. Address the issue of poverty alleviation through job creation and employment opportunities. As we have achieved substantial progress in extreme poverty alleviation, poverty alleviation need not be addressed separately any further.

## 4. Population Growth and Urban Overcrowding.

India is on track to become the world's most populous country by 2025, with the population expected to surpass 1.4 billion. This will place significant pressure on urban areas, leading to overcrowding, inadequate housing, strained infrastructure, and environmental degradation.

All the metro and burgeoning cities experience unplanned and short-sighted expansion leading to pot-holed and battered roads, severe traffic congestions, water logging during the rainy season, encroachment onto pedestrian walkways, leaking water and sewage pipes, poor waste management, etc.

### Recommendations:

i. Family planning with 2 child norm must be a national policy. The present TFR rate of 1.9 is a natural solution to the problem.

ii. Take all measures to stop infiltration of foreigners into our country.

iii. Address the issue of housing shortage of about 30 million in urban areas.

iv. Rising migration has resulted in significant slum population in metros and cities. This calls for both short-term and long-term measures.

v. Only 18% of urban commutation is by public transport. Public transport must be the main commuting means rather than personal and private vehicles.

vi. Urban cities and metros must prioritize waste management practices.

## 5. Healthcare System Challenges

India's healthcare system faces significant funding challenges, including overcrowded government hospitals, a shortage of medical professionals, and an increasing burden of lifestyle-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease. Access to quality affordable healthcare remains limited in urban areas, especially in rural areas.

### Recommendations:

i. Increase union and state outlay expenditure outlay on primary health care and infrastructure, currently less than 2% of GDP.

ii. Ensure required doctors are available for treatment. Doctor-to-population ration of 1:834, which is below WHO standard of 1:1000.

iii. There is an imminent mental health crisis looming large on the horizon, especially amongst the young and middle-aged group. There's only one psychiatrist per one lakh people, which needs attention and long-term action.

## 6. Agricultural Distress:

Agricultural distress is a pressing issue in India, impacting the vital sector of the economy and affecting about 45% of the population. Though India is the largest producers of wheat, rice and pulses, still we have to import foodgrains considering the shortfall in supply to meet the demand.

**Key Drivers of Agricultural Distress.**

**Stagnant Farm Incomes:** Despite policy efforts, real farm incomes have plateaued for most small and marginal farmers. Agriculture contributes only about 16% to GDP while employing nearly 45% of the population, indicating low productivity and disguised unemployment.

**Rising Input Costs:** Prices of fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, diesel, and animal feed have surged, outpacing income growth. This has eroded profit margins, especially for smallholders who lack bargaining power.

**Climate Change & Weather Volatility:** Increasingly erratic monsoons, unseasonal rains, and frequent droughts/floods have disrupted crop cycles

**Debt and Credit Constraints:** Many farmers remain dependent on informal credit sources with high interest rates. Indebtedness continues to be a major cause of agrarian distress and farmer suicides in some regions.

**Market & Price Volatility:** Farmers face price crashes due to supply gluts and lack of storage or processing infrastructure. MSP (Minimum Support Price) coverage remains limited—only a fraction of farmers benefit from procurement.

**Structural and Policy Challenges:** Average landholding size has declined to ~1.08 hectares, limiting economies of scale. Inefficient supply chains, poor rural infrastructure and limited cold storage lead to post-harvest losses. Policy Gaps: Delays in implementing reforms like agricultural market liberalization and crop diversification. Skewed Subsidies: Overemphasis on input subsidies (e.g., fertilizers) rather than income support or infrastructure.

The fisheries and aquaculture sector faces crucial challenges related to overfishing, habitat degradation, water pollution, interference of tourism activities, climate change, intrusion of sea water into brackish waters, with climate change straining the aqua ecosystem adversely to breeding of marine life. This sector is on a promising trajectory, yet, sustainability must remain central. Managing fishing through scientific stock assessments, promoting co-managed monitoring control and surveillance to curb illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing remains an ever-challenging problem.

As part of the aquatic value chain, strengthening of fishing ports and fishing harbours is a challenge, with severe strains on fiscal prudence in the wake of uncertainties, the Kochi Vallarpadam International Container Transshipment Terminal presenting a classic case of planning failure and hasty implementation.

**Recommendations:**

i. 50% of farmlands are still devoted to rice and wheat. The supply of rice and wheat must match the demand so that market gluts can be avoided and also farmers get fair and reasonable prices for their produce.

ii. Only 6-7% of farmers benefit from MSP. This share of farmers benefitting from MSPs must be 100%.

iii. Prioritize, smoothen and make the agricultural insurance scheme more efficacious and accessible to all farmers, small, medium and big categories.

iv. Tribals should be allotted cultivable land.

v. Further cutting down of forests by tribals to be ensured.

vi. Address the issue of sudden price fluctuations arising from hoarding, profiteering and other illegal malpractices by powerful middle lobbies.

vii. Adequate cold warehousing and storage facilities for rural agricultural produce to be provided.

viii. Food processing industries as value added services to be formed on co-operative basis with government aid to ensure formation, growth and operating as self-sustaining co-operative units.

ix. Augment centralized coordination and monitoring of our agricultural sector to avoid gluts in crop produce, which would adversely affect the farmers income due to reduced pricing. Resort to crop rationing if necessary.

x. Introduce specialized agriculture related short-termvocational courses like organic farming, crop rationing, toxic soil reclamation, rain water harvesting, waste water purification, etc addressing the crucial issues.

xi. Offer job prospects for the youth who have qualified from such short-term vocational courses.

## 7. Infrastructure Deficit:

India still faces an infrastructure deficit, because of its wide geographical area which is mostly inhabited, that calls for significant investments in road and rail transportation, solar, hydel and thermal energy systems, and digital networks, cloud storage, electronics modules, processors, sensors, relays, semiconductors, The inadequacy of infrastructure in the transportation, manufacturing and services sectors are bound to impede economic growth and smooth business operations.

### Recommendations:

i. Infrastructure cluster hubs with all road, health, education and livelihood means to be developed.

ii. Aim to position a few public sector banks amongst the top 10-20 global banks by 2047.

iii. Renewable energy share currently at 26% needs to be increased further to about 70-80%.

iv. Logistics cost is about 13-14% of GDP, as compared to global standards of 8-9%. Road and rail logistics scenario must be augmented still further.

v. Manufacturing share is stagnant at 15-16% of GDP. Manufacturing must increase commensurate with demand to reduce dependence on imports, especially electronics import presently at USD 85 billion annually.

vi. Incentivize R&D expenditure in public &private businesses, institutions, organizations. Aim for inclusion of about 10 institutions from India in the top 10-20 globally.

## 8. Fiscal Deficit and Public Debt:

The Indian government faces a perpetual challenge in maintaining a stable fiscal deficit and managing public debt levels. The repercussions of high fiscal deficits include inflation and economic instability. 80% of borrowings are for meeting revenue expenditure.

Fiscal deficit for FY25 stood at 4.8% of GDP (₹15.77 lakh crore), meeting the revised Union Budget target. Under the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003, the government originally aimed to reduce the deficit to 3% of GDP, but this timeline has been repeatedly extended. from FY 2026–27, attributable to higher welfare spending, subsidies, low and infrastructure outlays, combined with slower revenue growth. India plans to shift its fiscal anchor from the deficit target to the debt-to-GDP ratio.

**Recommendations:**

i. Promulgate laws on freebies definition, scope of freebies, prohibition, norms for implementation, monitoring and regulation, to prevent state revenue and fiscal deficits.

ii. Our debt-to-GDP ratio stands at 82%, one of the highest amongst emerging economies. Interest payments consume about 40% of revenue receipts. Adhere strictly to FRBM Act 2003.

iii. Only 6.5crore people pay income tax. There is a further need to imperatively widen the tax base and curb tax evasion and consequent loss to the public exchequer.

## 9. Trade deficits due to imposed tariffs and sanctions by USA, China.

The sequential build-up of India's trade deficit reflects a disturbing turn in its external trade ecosystem, largely attributable to the full 50% levy that came into effect in August 2025. There is a record surge in the bullion imports, which is just neither seasonal nor a coincidence, but a hedge against growing economic uncertainty.

**Recommendation:** This needs to be addressed on a diplomatic mode based on quid-pro-quo.

## 10. Governance & corruption.

Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies greatly hinder the ease of conducting business in India, consequently discouraging foreign investment. Corruption is deep rooted in India as India ranks 93rd out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2023, indicating persistent corruption in ordinary governance.

## Types of Corruption in India.

Petty Corruption: Bribes for routine services like issuing licenses, ration cards, or police verification.

Grand Corruption: High-level manipulation of policies, contracts, or public funds.

Political Corruption: Electoral fraud, vote-buying, and misuse of public office for political gain.

Judicial and Bureaucratic Corruption: Delays,favouritism, and bribery in courts and administrative processes.

The consequences include, erosion of public trust in institutions and governance, distorted economic development, with funds diverted from welfare to private pockets, reduced foreign investment due to regulatory uncertainty, Inefficiency in public services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, widening inequality and social injustice.

## Recommendations:

i. Powerful middlemen and mafia groups are making entries into the wholesale, distribution and retail segments in the agricultural, food processing, public distribution, real estate and housing rentals and credit sectors. These middlemen, by their intervention also raise the prices in order to accommodate their commissions, which also results in pseudo-inflationary regimes. This needs to be addressed collectively.

ii. More and more capable and young people of character need to be introduced into politics, to wean away corruption from political influence, which remains the greatest origin and end of cyclical corruption in India.

iii. About 5.1 crore legal cases are pending nationwide. Reforms in the judicial system are essential for ensuring fair, efficient, and transparent administration of justice. India's judiciary must be prepared to work for longer hours and periods optimizing their judicial vacations, modernize their functioning, deploy AI and digitally transform into a system that delivers timely justice.

iv. One major reason why MNCs and foreign companies are reluctant to establish industries in India is a poor contracts enforcement legally. Business contracts take a very long time for an ultimate decision. The Indian average delay is 1445 days which compares poorly with global standards.

v. As per UN standards, there has to be 222 policemen per lakh of population, while in India the figure is 152. Most of the times, the policemen are deployed for VVIP & VIP security, making them almost non-accessible to the common public when in times of need.

vi. More stringent and punitive penalties for corruption and other public-affected deliberate and malfeasance.

## 11. Climate Change and Environmental Degradation

India is experiencing the impacts of climate change, with erratic weather patterns, rising temperatures, and severe pollution levels. These changes are affecting agriculture, public health, and urban infrastructure, threatening both economic growth and quality of life.

COP30's main agenda is to shift from climate pledges to concrete action, with a strong emphasis on implementation, finance, and protecting the Amazon on a sequel to implementation of the Paris Agreement.

Countries are expected to present updated, more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and show how they will meet them, strengthening mechanisms to track emissions reductions, climate finance flows, and adaptation progress being a top priority.

Scaling-up climate finance and equity developed countries are under pressure to fulfil and exceed the $100 billion annual climate finance goal.

Hosting COP30 in Belém highlights the Amazon's role as a carbon sink and its vulnerability to deforestation. Cities are recognized as key actors in climate mitigation and adaptation. Leveraging AI, satellite monitoring, and climate modelling to improve early warning systems and adaptation planning.

A UN Report released in Nov 2025 found that India topped in the rise of absolute volume of greenhouse gas emissions during 2023-24. India's per capita emission, however, remains the lowest among the major economies, though on an upward curve.Indian experts point towards the contradiction in India's climate policy, referring to the report. The report confirms that India is caught in a climate justice trap. While the country's low per-capita emissions are a moral high ground, its rising total emissions, lack of proper reporting, and non-submission of an NDC 3.0 puts the country in a tight spot. UNEP's Emissions Gap Report is a wake-up call for India.

**Recommendations:**

i. Address the plastic menace issue with strong policy measures, prohibition and regulation rules, especially, in metros, cities and semi-urban areas. Subsequently, extend these to remote, rural and village areas.

ii. Strictly prohibit plastic waste generation in tourism areas in forest, high range, Himalayan valleys, water bodies, lakes, rivers and beaches.

iii. 41 of world's most polluted cities are in India. 1.7 million people die from pollution related diseases annually in India. Delhi is a classic case for immediate action. Prepare action plans in short and long-term for the affected cities.

## 12. Water scarcity.

India's both surface and ground water crisis is a growing concern, with many regions facing severe shortages due to over-extraction, pollution, and climate change. Groundwater depletion because of reckless over-drawal and uneven water distribution are exacerbating the problem.

All over the country well water is still a major source of drinking water, especially in the rural and semi-urban areas. The water looks clear from above, but when tested reveals presence of heavy metals like uranium, chromium, fluoride-laced residues, etc. The World Bank estimates that environmental degradation from polluted water and soil drains the exchequer about $80billion or equivalent to 6% of GDP. Health costs from polluted water and concomitant diseases run into billions of dollars annually.

International buyers are increasingly demanding traceability and safety standards. Instances galore of export rejections over contaminations.

The scenario is alarming that it widens the inequality, with wealthier households able to buy bottled water, while the poorer villagers can ill-afford to follow suit.

Polluted water when used for irrigation not only contaminates fertile agricultural soils but also affect the crop yields and agricultural productivity. Soil degradation is observed in one-third of the agricultural lands, with polluted water exacerbating the degradation.

The link between contamination and human capital loss is alarming. Diarrheal illnesses still killmany children below the age of five. Beyond these health

tragedies, the consequences represent a steady erosion of India's most valuable resource, its people.

India's water crisis is a growing concern, with many regions facing severe shortages due to over-extraction, pollution, and climate change. Groundwater depletion and uneven water distribution are exacerbating the problem.

**Recommendations:**

i. Though India has a national RWH policy, augment the initiatives intensively and extensively. Take actions to implement large scale rain water harvesting in cities and villages, by creating artificial water bodies utilizing the natural valley terrains to use.

ii. Conserve the water bodies and rivers to ensure fresh water availability for future needs. UN per capita water scarcity threshold value is 1000cu.m. In India, the freshwater availability has been declining steadily form 1800 in 2001 onwards and is presently alarmingly at 1100cu.m. It is expected to fall to 500cu.m by 2050.

iii. There are about 300 polluted river stretches which warrants immediate pollution eradication and cleansing activities.

**13. Digital Divide and Cybersecurity Threats**

While India is becoming increasingly digitized, there is still a significant digital divide between urban and rural areas. Additionally, as India's digital footprint grows, so do the risks associated with cybersecurity and data privacy.

**Recommendations:**

i. Rural internet access at 18% has to be increased to 100%.

ii. Smart phone penetration is about 74% in India, but uneven across states,

iii. 18% of global cyber-attacks are in India and ransomware up to 54%. These issues need to be addressed.

**14. Monitoring & Correction Mechanism:** NITI Aayog and PMO to set a roadmap every five years coinciding with election of new union governments, say, 2030, 2035, 2040, 2045 & 2047, to identify progress, shortfalls in targets and formulating corrective measures to stay on track till the final target is achieved.

**15. Paradigm and cultural shift needed in citizens:** Our Hon'ble PM recently remarked in a public meeting that the citizens of India need to be constructively restless till our country's goals are achieved. The citizens of India must be imbued with the required cultural mindset and attitude to be responsible citizens.

This cultural shift and positive attitudes would definitely help in improving inefficiencies in public administration and deliverance of public schemes and public institutions.

16. Over the years, the younger generation has imbibed a smart way of seeing, approaching and living. Work less and less, while we earn more and more. Infosys founder was in a controversy for having stated that Indian youth must imbibe China's 9-9-6 rule and work 72hours a week. A Viksit Bharat Mission of tall dreams and vision is only plausible if our youth live up to the PM's expectations and take up challenging initiatives and responsibilities. However, the need to work more, smarter and harder has not gone down well with our youth, who choose to enjoy their work and leisure equally, without any sacrifices on the work front.

17. **Paradigm shift needed in the "purpose of businesses".** We all are familiar with the purpose of business as maximization of owners' wealth. Today's businesses maximize profits by increasing their scale of operations and reducing expenses, not limited to production, establishment, wages & salaries, welfare, distribution and overheads.

Notwithstanding the legal right of businesses to earn profits, the time has arrived on defining a reasonable profit for businesses to sustain and grow.

If such lofty Missions like Viksit Bharat have to be achieved, businesses must play a proactive positive role towards social welfare funding and the infrastructure and CAPEX requirements, without expecting only the Govt to borrow and invest CAPEX. Businesses, even the large ones are even today reluctant to invest in CAPEX for infrastructural requirements, except those within their premises.

Further, businesses, must increase their R&D expenditure. Presently, share in R&D is 41% by businesses, 50% by Govt and 9% by academic S&T Institutions.

Total national R&D spending remains modest compared to global peers, hovering around 0.7% of GDP, far below countries like South Korea (~4.5%) or China (~2.4%).The Union Budget 2025–26 allocated ₹20,000 crore to the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to establish a private sector-driven R&D fund.

**Recommendations:**

i. Businesses to voluntarily involve in social welfare funding and CSR.

ii. Businesses to enhance private sector participation in R&D, as compared to global benchmarks.

iii. Government to augment limited tax incentives and clear regulatory hurdles.

iv. Consolidate the fragmented innovation ecosystem, especially for MSMEs.

v. Incentivize venture capital and risk appetite for long-gestation R&D.

## 17. Paradigm shift needed in politics & governance.

Political science aims to understand how power, governance, and decision-making shape societies, while politics should ideally be the practice of organizing collective life around justice, fairness, and the common good, service to the common good, prioritize collective welfare over narrow interests, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities.

i. Politics should be the art of peaceful negotiation, finding solutions through dialogue rather than conflict.

ii. Citizens must have a voice in shaping policies that affect their lives, making politics inclusive and democratic.

iii. Political leaders should act with integrity, transparency, and responsibility, recognizing their role as custodians of public trust.

iv. States must work in unison and offer governmental proactive contributions in order for national goals to be accomplished. The Union Government, in its reciprocal role, must be fair, transparent and have mutual trust and respect for the concept of federalism enshrined in our Constitution.

This remains the greatest challenge today to the Viksit Bhart Mission 2047. Politics and politicians must evolve and change for the better with time and work truly for the development of the common man and the nation.

## 18. Challenge of striking a balance between Idealism & Realism:

The trending zeitgeist nowadays is to present ground realities, everything and anything, as what and how it should ideally be, rather than what and how it is in actual reality. Idealism is the catchword for the ruling front while it is just the reverse for the opposition.

### Recommendations:

i. Idealism can hinder the resolution of real-world problems by prioritizing abstract visions over practical constraints, often leading to inaction, inefficiency, or unintended consequences like creating policy gridlock, neglecting human behaviour, misallocating resources, over-investment in symbolic or visionary project, neglect of mundane but critical issues like

infrastructure, maintenance, or enforcement and focus on image over impact.

ii. The pragmatic approach is striking a balance, while idealism inspires progress, it must be tempered by realism to ensure feasibility and sustainability, adapt to changing conditions, deliver measurable outcomes. Idealism without realism is naïve; realism without idealism is cynical".

**19. India, a mystique nation.**

The World Happiness Report 2025, by the Wellbeing Research Centre at Oxford, places Finland, Denmark, Iceland and Sweden at the top (the top positions are more or less repeated very year), placing India at 124th, swinging between 144th in 2012 and 94th in 2022, post Covid. This radical swing is also a concern.

The happiness rankings are based on six key measures, viz, GDP per capita – economic strength, healthy life expectancy – years lived in good health, social support – strength of community and family ties, freedom to make life choices – autonomy in daily life, generosity–willingness to help others, perceptions of corruption–trust in institutions.

Now, Pakistan is at a 109th rank. Isn't it surprising that India with 10 times more GDP, can trail behind Pakistan in happiness.

Societies with a lower expectation always report being happier. In vibrant India, rising aspirations and constant media scrutiny can lower perceived satisfaction levels. When citizens expect cleaner cities and better governance, dissatisfaction reflects higher expectations. This paradox explains why USA has fallen down 24 ranks despite record wealth, good governance and cleanest cities.

**Conclusion: The way forward.**

1. To climb the happiness ladder, we must pair economic with empathy infrastructure. We need to focus on GNH (gross national happiness) in addition to GDP.

2. First rebuild social capital, create community spaces, shared social gatherings and meals and inter-generational ties. Household size and community kindness significantly raise happiness.

3. Secondly, restore public trust in Govt Institutions and Offices. When public services from ration cards to railway tickets work transparently, trust builds up and reflects in greater happiness levels.

4. Thirdly, recognize that mental health is as important as physical health. It may be prudent and imperative to evolve a national policy on mental health. Economic development mirrors human capital productivity, which fundamentally is mirrored by mental and psychological well-being.

To conclude, realizing the bold vision of Viksit Bharat will require unwavering dedication, effective coordination between different levels of government, and the collective effort of all Indians. With sustained commitment and strategic action, India can indeed achieve its aspiration of becoming a globally developed nation by 2047, ushering in an era of greater prosperity, borne out of the happiness of its proud citizens, combined with the emotional, mental and psychological well-being of its people.

# DISCLAIMER

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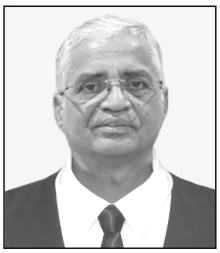
# FORUM FOR REFORMS
# PROFILE DETAILS OF CORE MEMBERS
**(In alphabetical order)**



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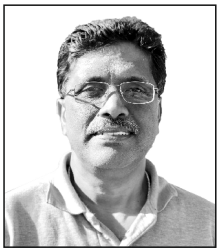

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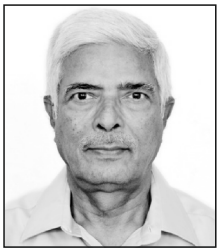

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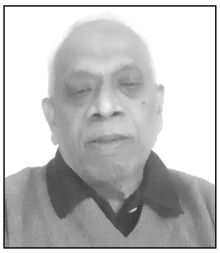

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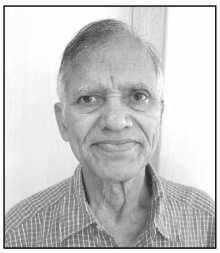

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Reforms in India are essential for strengthening the nation's economic, social and administrative foundations. They help to modernise outdated systems, promote transparency, and ensure that public institutions function efficiently and fairly. Across sectors such as education, health, infrastructure, governance, economy, judiciary, electoral system, ecology, pollution and climate etc timely reforms enable the country to adapt to global challenges, harness technological change and enhance the quality of life for its citizens.

By embracing progressive and well-designed reforms, India can unlock its full potential and move steadily toward sustainable growth, stability and inclusive development. In this direction, we aim to examine the existing deficiencies in the system and offer practical, thoughtful solutions to address them.

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